Copyright

by

Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera

2021

The Dissertation Committee for Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera

certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Race, Gender and Environmental Struggles on the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico

Committee:

Christen A. Smith, Supervisor

Charles R. Hale, Co-Supervisor

Lorraine Leu

Bjorn Sletto

Shannon Speed

Juliet Hooker

Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo

Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Race, Gender and Environmental Struggles on the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico

by

Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree(s) of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin
August 2021

Dedication

To my mother, Sandra, for all your love, care, and commitment to joy during your life. You were and are an example of determination, brilliance, will, and strong spirit during your life time. I am who I am because of you, and I could not have made it this far without you. Thank you for showing me the core of love. You are here with me.

To my father, Miguel, thank you for being an example of brilliance and love. Thank you for always reminding us of our roots and your critical view of the world. Thank you for making me believe in freedom.

To the communities in the Costa Chica de Oaxaca, thank you for your example and fights for social justice and for the land.

Acknowledgments

I want to honor and acknowledge the ancestral Jumanos, Lipan Apache, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Caddo, and Kiowa homelands in which this doctoral work was thought, discussed, and learned. Settler colonizers infringed Indigenous dispossession and erasure in the current city of Austin, Texas where I was a graduate student from 2014–2021. This dissertation was completed in between ancestral homelands that surpass national borders, in between Kumeyaay territories in San Diego, California and Aztec, Totonaco, and Nahua lands in Puebla and Mexico City, in Mexico. My ethnographic work was done in Mixtec, Chatino, and Black ancestral lands in Oaxaca.

I offer respect and gratitude to Indigenous groups and their sovereign rights and lands across nations.

This dissertation could not have been possible without the support and guidance of my committee. I am deeply grateful to my two main advisors, Christen A. Smith and Charles R. Hale: thank you for your continuous dialogue, commitment to social justice, and critical thinking. Christen, thank you for providing all the guidance since I first came to Austin, for all your care beyond Academia, and your interest and commitment to my project during my doctoral journey. Thank you for challenging me and dialoguing with me about my ideas. You are an example of a critical and committed scholar. Charlie, I am deeply grateful for all of your care and attention to my doctoral research, and for all your time for reading, discussing, and listening to my ideas and projects. Thank you for pushing me towards radical ideas and to explore other understandings. Thank you for being an example of a committed scholar towards a better and fair world.

I am grateful to Shannon Speed, for believing in me and my project, and welcoming and guiding me on my transition from Mexico to Austin. Thank you for showing me other forms of doing Academia. Juliet Hooker, thank you for all of your guidance and seminar discussions, your

classes and our conversations were an intellectual inspiration for my doctoral journey. Aida Hernández, thank you for being a true mentor for me throughout all of these years, and for all of your accompaniment and encouragement to think critically—you are an inspiration to me. Lorraine Leu, thank you for all of your care and attentive listening during my years at LLILAS, and for your guidance and commitment to your students. Bjorn Sletto, I am grateful for all of your listening and careful reading of my project; thank you for also helping me to think about future projects for publications and guidance on geography critical thinking.

I also want to thank professors Sharmila Rudappra, Eric Tang, Irma Alicia Velasquez Nimatuj, and Toyin Falola for your classes that shaped my research and doctoral journey. I am forever grateful for my cohort, colleagues and friends who blossomed during my time at UT Austin: Prisca Gayles, Ana Braconnier, Azucena Pacheco, Shanya Cordis, Marianela Muñoz, Raiye Adeleye, Jaime Gonzalez, Siri Gurudev, César Ibarra, Adriana Linares, Elizabeth Velazquez, Shanya Cordis, Claudia Chávez, Juan Tiney Chirix, Beth Colón, Anthony Dest, Ronny Castillo, Manuel Galaviz, Sonquo Tapia, Michael Reyes, Nathalia Ochoa, Maricarmen Hernández, Noé Lopez, Davi Pereira, Pablo Millalen, Ana María Navas, Alexandra Lamiña, Mario Castro, Mariana Morante, Moravia de la O, and Susanna Sharpe. Thank you to all the graduate students, professors, and staff at LLILAS! Special thanks to the NAIS community at UT Austin and professors Luis Cárcarmo-Huechante and Luis Urrieta. I am particularly grateful for the different writing groups that I had during this journey, I hold in my heart the space of care built with Shanya Cordis, and the other one with Siri and Cesar, this dissertation would not have been possible without you all. Thank you also to Nicole Crevar for your editing work on this dissertation!

To my Austin community, my life in Austin would not have been the same without your presence in my life. Thank you for your friendship and love, and for making me feel at home:

Claudia Aparicio, Ashley Hicks, Maribel Falcón, Mónica Teresa Ortiz, Erin Gentry, Alejandra, Francisco, Resistencia Bookstore, and Lilia Rosas. A very special thanks to my Chulitas, who were the other heart of my life and music in Austin: Xochi, Camila, Alejandra, Shavone, Jessenia, and Ana Cecilia.

Thank you to my chosen family and friends outside of Austin who have accompanied me in my different transitions on my life: Lía García, Carolina Rodríguez, Amira Ramírez, Itza Amanda Varela, Ashley Ngozi Agbasoga, Tito Mitjans, Erika Lozano, Mariana Favela, Mario Rodríguez, Rosario, Esmeralda y Jaziel Guzmán.

I am forever grateful to the *Red de Feminismos Descoloniales* in Mexico for being one of the special places for my academic and political formation, but also for deep affective relationships: Sylvia Marcos, Aída Hernández, Márgara Millán, Gisela Espinosa, Guiomar Rovira, Verónica López, Mariana Favela, and Oscar González.

Thank you to the Zapotalito, Campamento Cerro Hermoso, Chacahua, and all of the communities in Costa Chica. Especially, thank you to Yolanda Camacho and Juan for opening up your house and your family, and for caring for me in Zapotalito. Yolanda, thank you for all the time we spent together, and the laughs, the long conversations, and the trips to different spaces. Thank you to Rosa María Castro for opening your home and sharing your knowledge with me. Thank you for allowing me to travel with you across the Coast. Thank you to Monica Morales, Virginia Morales, Cristina and Brígida Arellanes, for opening your house and your community, and for all the fun times in. Zapotalito. Thank you to all the women who talked and shared their lives with me. Your communities are an inspiration to my life.

Finally, I feel deep gratitude for my family: Sandra my mother and Miguel my father, thank you for creating an environment since I was a child to seek for my own truth and to live with

passion and love. To Sandy, my sister, thank you for being also a best friend, a listener, and a fun person. Thank you for reminding me to center care and joy. Thank you to Miguel, my brother, and to my nephews, Jorge, Yael, and Frida; and thank you to my aunt Martha and my cousin, Yatziri, and to tía Mayela and all of my cousins in Aguascalientes.

Through different stages of my doctoral research, I received funding support from different entities and I am deeply grateful: Graduate School at UT Austin, Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT), CONTEX, Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies (LLILAS), E.D. Farmer Fellowship, American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the U.S-Mexico Center at University of California San Diego.

Abstract

Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Race, Gender and Environmental Struggles on the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico

by

Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera, PhD.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2021

SUPERVISORS: Christen A. Smith, Charles R. Hale

This dissertation explores the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons in the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico and its economic, social, and emotional impact on the Black and Indigenous women. Based on 14 months of fieldwork in the region, I argue that mestizaje—an homogenizing project and the foundational myth of the Mexican nation-state—shapes how Black and Indigenous communities experience violence and the dispossession of their lands, through what I call necro-mestizaje. The potential loss of the lagoons and the loss of community members due to violence are related social phenomena that produce collective grief that is both racialized and gendered and manifests acutely in Black and Indigenous women's stories.

Black and Indigenous women in the region seek to transform their personal and collective grief into political mobilization and seek strategies for the continuation of the life of their communities, their land, and the water. I name these spaces of grief as grieving geographies. These women create inter-ethnic alliances (like mutual-aid initiatives) and perform collective care towards the lagoons to disrupt the economic, social, and political consequences of ecocide. In other words, grief is the catalyst of local organizing for the preservation of the lagoons and produces

local counter-hegemonic narratives against environmental racism. These narratives are strategies of survival and as well as a response to a matrix of violence in the region: racism, sexism, narcotrafficking, and ecocide.

This dissertation is aligned with activism and collaboration with Black and Indigenous women's organizations and community labor. My research methods include participant observation, oral histories, semi-structured interviews, and participatory community mapping. Through body-maps, a feminist geography methodology of mapping, local women illustrate the intimate relationship between their own bodies, the lagoons, and the community. These body-maps also challenge the whitening project of mestizaje that erases Black and Indigenous territoriality. I also reflect on my positionality and my own experience with grief throughout the research project. This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on environmental racism and dispossession in Latin America, the anthropology of emotions, and feminist ethnography and geography, where emotions are centered as catalysts for local political mobilization.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1:

Grief as a Method

To my mother, Sandra

The Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons are a beautiful body of water connected to the Pacific Ocean located on the Costa Chica of Mexico. The small communities of Black, Indigenous and Mestizo populations that live around the lagoons have an intimate relationship to it, the land, and each other—a relationship that deeply represents the physical, emotional, social, and political connectivity between humans and non-humans in Mexico's geography. According to Marisol De la Cadena (2010), *non-human* or *other-than-human* refer to the plants, the animals, the land, and in general, those earth-beings (humans) have political agency. The lagoons are, therefore, sentient and actively in relationship with the people from the communities who live around them.

Black and Indigenous women around the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons are resisting the ecocide of this body of water through their everyday actions. From September 2017 until June 2018, I conducted fieldwork primarily in Zapotalito, one of the communities that surrounds the lagoons. Black and Indigenous women were constantly organizing mutual aid initiatives, cleaning the water, and practices of care to survive amidst the environmental degradation of the lagoons. The communities that live in the area are facing environmental racism because they are disproportionately affected by environmental practices and are constantly ignored by the government. On September of 2017, after a massive earthquake of 7.1 on the Richter scale, hundreds of fish appeared floating dead over the lagoons. According to local people, this happened because of toxic gases that accumulated on the subsoil of the lagoons came to the surface with the

movement of the earth. Unfortunately, dead fish is now a common image in the lagoons, and this affects directly the surrounding communities, which live primarily on selling and consuming fish. Every day, women and men from the communities go to the lagoons with the sunrise looking for fish, but this space also becomes a space for solitude, for reflection of their lives, and for the affective interconnectedness with nature. Black and Indigenous women feel grief for the environmental degradation and possible death of the lagoons. Grief becomes a central emotion in the community that permits the processing of loss as well as becomes a fuel for political mobilization and community organizing.

This dissertation grapples with the interconnections between environment, gender, geography, race and mestizaje in Mexico. Through analyzing the case of the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons in the coast of Oaxaca that started in the early 2000s, I explore the different forms in which environmental racism operates in Mexico and its connections to territoriality, narcotrafficking violence, gender, race and sexuality.

My research is guided by the following questions: How is mestizaje, as a project, transformed when fused with the sovereign prerogative to decide who/what will be allowed to live or left to die[1]? I name the intersection between this sovereign prerogative and mestizaje, necro-mestizaje. When the people and places who are most directly subjected to necro-mestizaje act to grieve this slow death, what work does their grieving do? How does a grieving geography motivate and interpolate a grieving people, and visa-versa? Under conditions of dire intersectional inequity, violence, and oppression, how do the women of Zapotalito find the inner resilience and capacity to hope, dream, and resist?

This dissertation offers the central practice of grieving, not as the passive, inward-facing individualized acts that the word often conjures in dominant western societies, but rather as

collective emotional expression and agency. Grief becomes an act of refusal for erasure and slow annihilation. Grief, in the context of the Costa Chica, becomes an insistence on the presence of Black and Indigenous people—a radical act in a nation that has constructed its identity in part on the absence of Blackness. The process of grieving draws Zapotalito women together, sharpens their critique of necro-mestizaje and its toll, deepens their resilience, fortifies their "radical hope," and imbues their righteous political anger with profound emotional force. In sum, my central argument is that necro-mestizaje, understood as the material impacts of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism inherent to the foundation of the Mexican nation-state project, is based on the disappearance and erasure of racialized geographies through processes of slow annihilation of their communities and land. Through feelings of loss, rage, nostalgia, and sorrow, grief becomes a potentiality for political mobilization against the Mestizo project of disappearance and erasure. Black and Indigenous women repair and re-write their landscape and existence through the creation of counter-hegemonic cartographies, mutual aid projects, and practices of solidarity and care with themselves, their community, and the lagoons.

Black and Indigenous women in Mexico use different, counter-hegemonic strategies to repair life in the context of administered death, not only through legible forms of activism and organizing, but also through affective and emotional weaving and practices of care and solidarity. These affective practices not only happen among people, but also in relationship to the lagoons. The ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon has a symbolic and structural relationship to an expanding landscape of death in the region—specifically, a landscape of death that is racialized and gendered. The intensification of narcotrafficking in the region is also causing the death of people in the communities around the lagoons, and these deaths cannot be dissociated from the raced and gendered necropolitics of the Mexican state and the transnational politics of

neoliberalism, tourism, and manufacturing. In this dissertation, I explore how Black and Indigenous communities experience grief due to the loss of their environment, the lagoons, but also due to the loss of members of their communities due to narcotrafficking and State violence.

The Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons have been a "federally protected area," since the Mexican state declared it a National Park in 1937. During my fieldwork in the lagoon town of Zapotalito from September 2017 until June 2018, I came to know the pain of this ecocide up close. Every time I would visit the lagoon, no matter the time or hour of the day, I would find dead fish in the bay. Every time I took a trip by boat to Chacahua, the other community connected with the lagoon, I would see dead fish floating in the middle of the water. The fishing communities and boatmen would tell me that, unfortunately, dead fish are a common sight in the water. However, the fish were not the only ones dying in the lagoon. The mangroves inside the lagoon that give oxygen to the water are dying as well, as evidenced by the death of other sea animals, such as shrimp, mussels, and birds, that live in the mangroves.

I explore the irony of the lagoons being a conservation zone on the one hand, and the site of the colonial project of dispossession and policing of the local Black and Indigenous population on the other. Zapotalito is a community that primarily lives off of the lagoons, based on fishing and, more recently, on tourism. The death of the lagoons would mean the impossibility of life for these communities on this land. In other words, the death of the lagoons is directly tied to the elimination of a Black and Indigenous geography. I argue that the ideology of mestizaje is deeply invested in this human and non-human elimination, as part of its whitening project. These racialized geographies are also subjected to constant dispossession, exploitation, and colonization by the Mexican nation-state, a process that I call "mestizo geographies."

Mestizo geographies are the spatial processes of slowly erasing and trying to eliminate Black and Indigenous people and territories through dispossession and displacement, as well as through pollution, tourism, and toxicity. Ecocide has a social, political, and economic impact on the lives of the communities surrounding the lagoons as well as an *emotional* impact. In this sense, there is an affective interrelation in between human and other-than human beings. According to Marisol De la Cadena (2010), non-human or other-than-human[2] refer to the plants, the animals, the land, and in general, those earth-beings (humans) who have political agency. My interest is to understand the lagoons as a sentient and active being in relationship with the people from the communities.

While conducting fieldwork, I asked people in the Zapotalito community how they felt about the slow murder[3] of the lagoons. I use the term "slow murder" because there is an intentionality to the ecocide and to the silence and lack of solutions by the Mexican government. Many of them named different emotions, such as sadness, sorrow, anger, frustration, anxiety, and melancholy. When I began my fieldwork, I thought about the situation at the lagoon in terms of political annihilation, including the economic, political, and social consequences of environmental racism in Mexico towards Black and Indigenous communities and territories. However, my own experiences with loss shifted my perspective. The sudden death of my mother in 2018 inspired me to rethink my analysis of my experiences in the field to focus on grief, healing, and the emotional dynamics of ecocide and violence in the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon.

The Political Context of Costa Chica

In 1998, Oaxaca's local constitution recognized Afrodescendants for the first time in Article 16. Also, in 2011 a sub-office of Afrodescendant population was created within the

National Commission of Indigenous People, and in 2013 it was declared that the 19th of October is the "Día del Pueblo Negro Afromexicano de Oaxaca" (Velázquez, and Iturralde 2016a). In Guerrero, it was not until 2014 that the local constitution recognized the Afrodescendant population. Most recently, at the beginning of 2017, the Afrodescendant population was recognized in the constitution of Mexico City, Article 11, Section N. However, their rights are limited to cultural ones: "Afro-descendants enjoy the rights recognized by this Constitution. They have the right to the protection and promotion of their traditional knowledge and their cultural, artistic, material and immaterial heritage." It is interesting that the same article also recognizes the existence of racism, perhaps for the first time in a State constitution:

> The authorities shall take effective measures of equal treatment, in consultation and cooperation with these people, for the full exercise of their rights, combating prejudice and stigma, eliminating racism, as well as prevention, care, punishment and eradication of violence against them." (2017, Mexico City Constitution)[4]

Despite the hegemonic discourse of Mexico as a multicultural nation, the rights for Indigenous, and in some cases Afrodescendant, groups in the Federal Constitution also are reduced to cultural rights, but not economic or political rights. Charles Hale refers to this phenomenon as neoliberal multiculturalism, because "it is nourished by the recognition of cultural difference, and by extension, of the distinctions between cultural rights that deserve to be recognized and those that do not" (2006, 37). In 2019, for the first time, the Black population was recognized by the Federal Government and included in the National Constitution. The recognition is only after more than twenty years of activism by Black organizations, most of which are based in la Costa Chica of Oaxaca and Guerrero.

According to América López Chávez (2018) the precedents for the Afromexican political mobilization in the Costa Chica region started in the 1970s. Some of the important events are the guerrilla movement in the 70s, when the farmers challenged *caciques*[5] for territorial space.

Furthermore, the "Black population from the Costa Chica of Guerrero united in 1992 with the Indigenous movement named as Consejo Guerrerense 500 años de Resistencia Indígena, Negra y Popular," founded in 1991.

Other scholars argue that the political mobilization of Black people in la Costa Chica started in the 1980s (Hoffmann and Lara, Gloria 2012). In comparison to other Latin American countries, such as Colombia and Brasil—where even they have laws against racial discrimination—the Afrodescendant social movement in Mexico was delayed because of the mestizaje and indigenista projects. Hoffmann and Lara argue that this later Afro-Mexican movement is due to "the co-optation of social movements by the corporativism of Mexican state since the 40's" (2012, 29). The first Black organization in the country was Mexico Negro, which is based in Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero. According to one of its founders, Sergio Peñaloza, in an interview I had with him during the summer of 2018, México Negro started after a Black Haitian priest named Padre Glynn Jemmott was in Guerrero and started mentoring Afromexicans for their political mobilization during 1997. Gloria Lara (2010) argues that the local people who started the Black visibilization initiative with Padre Glymm viewed him as an authority figure in their community, which enabled access to material and social resources and permitted a major influence and fuel for the Black movement.

México Negro organized the first "Encuentro de Pueblos Negros" in 1997 in the community of El Ciruelo, Oaxaca. Other organizations appeared during this period, such as ECOSTA, AFRICA A.C., and EPOCA. In 2021, there are more Black organizations around the country, and many of them are women-led. This happened after women like Rosa María decided that Black women had to have a more active and visible role in the broader movement. Some other

Black women led organizations, aside from AMCO, Colectiva de la Costa Ña`a Tunda, and Mujeres Pescadoras del Manglar, are REMCO (Red de Mujeres de la Costa) and Guerreras.

The recent recognition of the Black population in the Federal Constitution in 2019 is only a result of the activism of these organizations, which originated in the Coast of Oaxaca and Guerrero. In 2021, for the first time, the Black population was considered part of the national census. According to the census, 2,576,213 people self-identified as Afromexican, Afrodescendant, or Black in Mexico, which represents 2% of the total national population. Of this group, 50.4% are women and 49.6% are men. Oaxaca is the second largest state with a Black population, at 4.7% or 194,474 people, and Guerrero's Black population is 8.6%. Furthermore, according to Rosa María Castro in a newspaper interview (Valenzuela, 2021), 7.4% of these people speak an Indigenous language, which indicates the Afro-Indigenous existence in Costa Chica. As such, the Costa Chica region is a dynamic and complex geography with political initiatives, but also with tensions. Still, local community members have managed to try to protect their land and communities through different State-autonomous mechanisms and political organizations.

Blackness, Gender, and Mestizaje

Throughout this dissertation, I draw from the Black feminist theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1993a; A. Y. Davis 1983a; Hill Collins 2000a), and Achille Mbembe's (2003) theory of necropolitics, which refers to the ways in which life and death are administered by the State. Additionally, I employ theories of mestizaje and racial formation in Latin America (Hale 2006; Hooker 2017; Wade 2000a) to understand the complex ways in which mestizaje seeks the racial and ethnic homogeneization of the nations on the one hand while at the same time leaving space for the negotiation of inclusion and/or exclusion.

Many scholars already have laid out the basic critique of the ideology of mestizaje ideology in Latin America. The differential racialization of Black and Indigenous peoples, a signature feature of the ideology of mestizaje has also been well documented and argued. However, there are Afro-Latin American thinkers, such as Abdias do Nascimento (1989) and Lélia González (1988b), who have explored how discourses of racial democracy and mestizaje in a space like Brazil, for example, are deadly, especially for Black populations. Nascimento (1989) argues that the strategy of miscegenation is a genocidal strategy (or massacre) of the Brazilian nation-state that is only designed "to save the white race from the threat of inferiorization posed by the presence of black blood. The racist ideology of the time was so unabashed that the stated objective of government projects was the eradication of the Black race through the 'salvation' of European immigration and the infusion of massive quantities of Aryan blood to the national stock (75)." In other words, for Abdias do Nascimento, the whitening project of the nation through mixture is a project of genocide against Black populations. Ochy Curiel (2013), Breny Mendoza (2001), and Angela Gilliam (1996) have written about the gendered and violent processes of mestizaje as the formation of heterosexual whitening nation-project nations in Latin America through the rape of Indigenous and Black women by the White male colonizers. In the same note, Christen Smith (2016) analyzes the ways in which in Brazil, "The nation is clearly imagined as not only a white space but also as a male, heterosexual space" (104). Gilliam defines this sexualized and gendered violent process as "the great sperm theory of national formation" (54) where the violence against Black women is romanticized, the role of Black women in the formation of the national culture is rejected, and the inequity between men and women is eroticized (Gilliam, as cited in Carneiro, 2019). This genealogy of thought is the precedent for the critiques of mestizaje that Black women also engage in Mexico.

In Mexico, critiques of the violence of mestizaje also exist. Most recently, Afro-Latinx poets and activists, such as Alan Pelaez Lopez (2018) and Ariana Brown (2018), have critiqued mestizaje as explicitly violent against Black and Indigenous people in Mexico, but also how it is translated in the context of the U.S. through the category of "latinidad." Mónica Moreno Figueroa (2020) has explored how, in order for the mestizaje project to be successful in Mexico, it needs the continuous aversion to Blackness. In other words, the negation of Blackness is a necessary strategy for the maintenance of the Mexican national identity project.

Following the contributions of these Afro-Latin American writers and thinkers, an additional dimension beyond this well-known story comes into view in the Costa Chica: even as the state, the captains of capital, and other institutions of the dominant society espouse and propagate this familiar mestizaje ideology, their affirmation is expressed not only as a praxis of assimilation/exclusion in the Costa Chica. In addition, it is expressed as a politics of death, a "necro-mestizaje." The resulting "slow annihilation" afflicts both the landscape and the people, and these effects are both racialized and deeply gendered. This finding requires a rethinking of existing critical representations of mestizaje ideology—an argument brought more forcefully into focus because Black and Indigenous people experience these effects in the same territorial context. Even as Indigenous populations and most recently (as of 2019) Black populations have been recognized as part of the Mexican mestizo nation through multiculturalist policies, in the context of the Costa Chica, there is a paradox of material everyday processes of slow annihilation.

I write from a feminist ethnographic and geographic perspective (D.-A. Davis and Craven 2016; Hernández Castillo 2015; Speed 2006; Elmhirst 2011; Zaragocin Carvajal, Moreano Venegas, and Alvarez Velasco 2018; Domosh and Seager 2001; Datta 2020). I also employ

activist research methods (Hale 2001; 2008) to explore how we, as researchers, commit to politically engaged research in order to understand landscapes of violence and refusal.

This dissertation is based on 14 months of fieldwork (summer 2016, September 2017–Agust 2018, and summer 2019) in the Coast of Oaxaca, in the communities of Zapotalito, Campamento Cerro Hermoso, and other communities surrounding the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons. The people of Zapotalito self-identify as Black, Afromexican, Chatino, Mixteco, Mestizo, or Afro-Indigenous, such as Afro-Chatino or Afro-Mixteco. The inter-ethnic relations are negotiated daily, but there are no explicit boundaries within the different groups. According to INEGI, Chacahua has 800 people, of which 80% are classified as Black. According to elders in the community and some local historians, the island of Chacahua, had its origins in the maroon communities[6] that fled from haciendas. There is also a significant Indigenous and mestizo population.

Blackness and Indigeneity Inter-Ethnic Alliances in Mexico

As part of the anti-Black roots of the ideology of mestizaje, which sets the basis for the necro-mestizaje theory that I explore further in the dissertation, Afrodescendant populations in Mexico appear only as slaves in a colonial historical past, which erases them from subsequent national history (Quechua Reyna 2015a). Davidson (1981) argues that the concentration of Africans in New Spain between 1550 and 1650 existed mainly in four areas: in Veracruz; in the north and center of Mexico City working in mines; on a route from Puebla to the Pacific Coast; and in Mexico City, where there were around 20,000–50,000 slaves. Lewis (2003) states that most African slaves brought to Mexico were men. According to Cope (1994), "By the early 1570s, blacks formed by far the largest part of the castas, outnumbering mestizos by more than eight to

one. Furthermore, Afro-Mexicans had highly visible roles in Mexico´s economy, especially in urban areas. In Mexico City, blacks and mulattoes specialized in domestic service, but they also penetrated into the skilled trade" (17).

Evidence also demonstrates slave insurgencies and maroon communities in the country, such as in Mexico City. Cope (1994) argues, "An alleged slave conspiracy to take over in Mexico City in 1537 was followed by at least two more uprisings during the 1540s. Slave insurrections then spread to the northern mining areas, where black allied themselves with the still un-conquered Chichimec-Indians" (17). This is one of the examples of early inter-ethnic alliances between the Black and Indigenous population against class and race oppression. Black and Indigenous populations also collaborated in the army during the colonial period in Mexico. They fought together either against or for the Spanish empire or fighting against each other (Vinson III and Restall 2005). Additionally, in spaces where Black and Indigenous groups co-existed, they sometimes married but also experienced inter-communal tension and violence between them (Castillo, Palma, and Kellogg 2005). Spaniards were afraid of alliances between the Black population with the Mestizo population, because they could easily surpass the number of the white population (Vinson 2018).

In the particular case of La Costa Chica, there are Afrodescendants, Mixtecs, Chatinos, Nahua, Tlapanecos, Amuzgos, and Mestizos[7] (Lara, 2010a). However, the political and economic power of the region is still in the hands of the Mestizo population (Castillo Gómez 2003). Some tension still exists between Black and Indigenous populations co-existing in a shared space, due to land or even State demands that privilege one group over another (Hooker 2005d; Greene 2007). According to some scholars (Castillo Gómez 2003; Mollett 2006), this conflict can be expressed discursively as anti-Black racism[8] among the Indigenous population, or from an anti-indigeneity

discourse among the Black population, both being characterized by supposedly "non modern, non-progressive" identities. All of these negative notions indicate a heritage of colonial discourses.

Recently, alliances have developed between Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations in the Coast of Oaxaca to protect the territory from transnational attempts at dispossession and occupation.[9] Other scholars have explored inter-ethnic alliances that seek to protect natural resources in Latin America (M. Anderson 2007). In other words, environmental and land defense have created a necessity for creating inter-ethnic alliances and solidarities across Mexico.

An important note to make is that throughout my fieldwork and research, there was also a part of the population around the lagoons who self-identified as Mestizo. However, these "Mestizos" were poor and dark skinned. Even though inter-ethnic tensions exist, and Mestizos overall hold the power in the region, the Mestizo population in the coastal region, specifically in the communities where I did my research, were also affected directly by the ecocide and necro-mestizaje apparatus. I argue that poor, darker-skinned Mestizos are also affected by environmental racism because of living in a Black and Indigenous space. Sylvia Wynter calls "metonymical race" to understand the "socio-symbolic calculus by which racial identification gets collapsed with class and social status in the Caribbean and Latin America[10]" (Wynter 1994). In this sense, the Mestizos who live around the lagoons are also interpellated by necro-mestizaje because of their proximity to Blackness and Indigeneity. However, it is important to mention that the majority of the people I interacted with in the field self-identified as either Black or Indigenous, therefore, they became the central subjects of my dissertation. However, there are some instances and moments where self-identified mestizos were also part of my project.

Black and Indigenous Women's Organizing

In the 2000s, Black women founded their own organizations in alliance with Indigenous women in the Coast of Oaxaca because, according to some of the women I interviewed, they felt the need to have their own spaces, where women´s voices were centered. Some of the organizations created inter-ethnic coalitions; other organizations have only Black women members, but they organize events and encounters with Indigenous women organizations across Mexico and the Americas because they encounter there is mutual lessons to learn and share. These organizations were created because, as Rosa María Castro explains to me, "We were participating in the organizations, and men were the only ones who were politically active, while us as women, were reproducing the same roles: cooking food during meetings, cleaning the places" (Interview Summer 2016). According to Helen Safa (2005), women create their own organizations because they "want a stronger voice in the movement and would like to address specific women's concerns such as domestic abuse or reproductive health" (318). This is also true for the Oaxacan Coast, as women have created their own organizations to organize around their particular necessities, including taking actions against gender violence in the communities and against the ecocide of the lagoons. This has meant the everyday negotiation of differences for a goal: the defense of their land and water. This organizing also includes exploring how to create alternative sources of income or how to collectively clean the lagoons.

This dissertation is based on my fieldwork with Black and Indigenous women in different communities in the Coast of Oaxaca. Since the beginning of my dialogues with the women on the Coast, I sought to engage with them collaboratively, politically supporting their work. I shaped my project to align my own work with the goals of the organizations and women with whom I worked. It is important to note that I collaborated with organizations and individuals. Although much of

my work with women who are not integrated into formal organizations –women who are engaging in political action in their everyday lives and activities in their communities. For me, their labor, as gendered labor of care, is also political even if its not legible as such on the surface. I also interviewed local men from the communities about the ecocide of the lagoons, and the origin of the communities, because in the end they are also directly affected by these violences.

Rosa María Castro founded the organization *Asociación de Mujeres de la Costa de Oaxaca* (Women´s Association of the Coast of Oaxaca), or AMCO and is based in Huatulco, Oaxaca. Rosa was born in Cerro Hermoso, Tututepec Oaxaca. This means that her community is also very close to the lagoons and, as a consequence, is directly affected by the ecocide. However, Huatulco is where she has based AMCO because it is where she lives now. Huatulco is one of the biggest cities on the Oaxacan Coast, and attracts a lot of tourism. AMCO has Black, Indigenous, and Mestiza members and the work they do is also for the three ethnic groups.

I met Rosa María back in 2016, when I traveled for the first summer of fieldwork to Huatulco, Oaxaca. I stayed in her place during the weekend and we had the time to have a first conversation on how my work could be addressed in the coast. We talked about the importance of highlighting women's roles in community organizing and the fight for human rights. In 2017, when I arrived at the coast to spend a whole year there, Rosa and I began to collaborate more. Rosa is a prominent community leader within the Black community in Mexico, but also with the groups of gender activists in the Oaxacan coast. Rosa, aside from her work as part of the organization AMCO, is a teacher at a technical school in Oaxaca. Rosa teaches students about cuisine, bartender and waitress, and in general courses about the service industry. She has managed to even create a way to combine her two major activities: Rosa has created community workshops in the region, specifically in Zapotalito, to teach them how to bake bread and pizza for example so women have

an extra source of income. These workshops are also presented as part of her work at the technical school.

AMCO has been doing work around gender violence, political violence, and psychological and legal advising for women in these communities. It is one of the first organizations lead by Black woman within the broader Black movement in Mexico. AMCO has organized multiple workshops around the Coast of Oaxaca and Guerrero for women´s rights. Furthermore, AMCO has provided a space for Black, Indigenous and poor Mestiza women to share their concerns around gender violence, political and economical violence. AMCO has a strong and close relationship to the Colectiva de la Costa Ña Tundaa, led by Yolanda Camacho. These two organizations have organized regional workshops for the education and encounter of Black women in Mexico.

Even though AMCO is based in Huatulco, Rosa and the team usually travel to the side where Black communities are established for executing their activities as a response to the different forms of gender violence that Black, Indigenous, and Mestiza women face while living on the Oaxacan coast.

Rosa describes the mission of AMCO in the following way:

> We bet on emotional empowerment, that is, a woman who is being emotionally violated can hardly move to other spaces, right? That is, we must at least soften that issue. How to *cicatrizar* or to heal as healers call it today? To heal so that it can transit, then we call that an intellectual empowerment, an economic empowerment, a political empowerment, it is like in stages. I don't know which one is going to be first, but the experts say that there cannot be political empowerment if there is no economic empowerment then… and it seems to me that this is the case from my personal perspective. So, when I analyzed that life story, that my grandmother told me many times! Because it was like, almost always, sending us the message "I don't want them to live that story" and they prepared us from childhood, so that we did not live that story." (Personal Interview, April 20 2018, Huatulco, Oaxaca)

Rosa's reference to "that story" refers to the story of gendered violence that her grandmother lived. In this account, Rosa relates immediately her own life story immediately to the work she wants to

do with women in the Coast of Oaxaca. She wants to do healing work among feminine and feminized people. This healing work occurs through different workshops, events, and accompanying processes that Rosa and her team frequently organize in the region.

Rosa also recognizes that it has not been an easy process and the dynamics in the communities have changed over time. Rosa explains,

> I tell you, the dynamics of participation in the communities has also changed. Women also participate more when they are summoned and also because the participation of women in this movement was necessary because the needs of the communities had to be put at a state level and they had to be more specific in those needs, that's why for example, the invisibility that even occurs at the micro level. (Personal Interview, April 20 2018, Huatulco, Oaxaca)

Rosa not only recognizes the microstructures of power that operate in the communities, but also, she sees more women actively participating after long struggles.

Although I was not based in Huatulco while I was conducting my fieldwork, I traveled periodically to meet Rosa and stay there for a night, and to help the organization with planning or executing activities as needed. One of the biggest events they have annually in March is the *Encuentro de Mujeres Indígenas, Afromexicanas y Mestizas* (Indigenous, Black and Mestiza Women´s Encounter). It commemorates International Women's day. In March of 2018, I had the opportunity to attend and help organize the 6th encounter. The official slogan of the annual event is, ¡*Nunca más la Costa Chica y México sin nosotras!* (Never more a Costa Chica and Mexico without us!), but the phrase in this case is in feminine form, which recalls the famous phrase created by the Zapatista movement in Chiapas when it first started: Nunca más un México sin nosotros (Never again a Mexico without us). This phrase alludes to how Mexico as a nation building project has historically denied and invisibilized Indigenous groups (such as the case of Zapatismo), and Black women (such as the case of AMCO's organizing). The word *nosotras* (us) entails a building of a collective that opposes a Mexican nation that excludes them.

In 2016, Yolanda Camacho founded *Colectiva de la Costa de Oaxaca Ña´a Tunda* (Ña'a Tunda Coast of Oaxaca Collective), or *Ña´a Tunda,* which means Black women in Mixtec language. The name also refers to Yolanda's own identity, because she identifies herself as an Afro-Mixtec, or Afro-Indigenous. The organization started based in Pinotepa Nacional, which I will refer to as Pinotepa. This location is a city located almost on the edge of the state of Guerrero state on the Coast. Yolanda lived there until the beginning of 2017. When I went to the coast for the first time in 2016 to introduce myself, I went to Yolanda's house in Pinotepa. We shared breakfast with her daughter, and we talked for a little bit on her terrace. I wrote my proposal project based on the organization being based in Pinotepa. However, when I arrived to the Coast in the summer of 2017, Yolanda had just moved to Zapotalito and the organization had move with her. In this sense, some assumptions that I had made about the organization changed, such as the role of the collective in Pinotepa, this original location's proximity to the state of Guerrero, and the internal dynamics of the organization and the members from Pinotepa. Yolanda's move changed my project too. Yolanda is also a prominent leader in the Afromexican movement for the recognition of the Black population in the country. Yolanda, aside from her work at the organization, is currently studying law because she wants to become a future lawyer for Black and Indigenous communities. Aside from the schoolwork, Yolanda usually would spend her days in Zapotalito and in other communities around the Coast giving workshops to women like knitting. In addition, Yolandoa helped them create new independent economic projects, such as medicinal plant products, production of coconut oil, and even how to create a sustainable chicken farm. Yolanda also is part of the Mexican National Network of Black and Indigenous Women Communicators, a space for women to create independent media about what is happening in their communities. During all these workshops and mentorship she gave around the communities, I

would go with her and help her with whatever was needed. Yolanda was living with her husband, Juan, in Zapotalito and it is in their home where mostly I would spend the nights in the community.

While I began analyzing Ña'a Tunda as an organization with established members and activities in a city, later I had to shift to analyze it as a new organization in a much smaller community that now welcomed its presence. Therefore, I was concerned with how this organization would welcome me in the space. The subject of my dissertation also changed. After spending the first two months in Zapotalito, I realize that the main concern of local Black, Indigenous, and Mestiza women was the ecocide happening in the lagoons. I understood I had to engage in a "deep listening" practice and decided to focus on the intersections between race, gender, and the environment. Colectiva Ña´a Tunda also has been addressing gender violence while also creating economic alternatives for women in the community that can help alleviate the crisis of the slow annihilation of the lagoons. I spent almost every day in the Coastal region, accompanying this organization and their work while on fieldwork, from organizing workshops to visiting women to talk about future autonomous economic projects. I also attended celebrations and trips to other communities around the Coast.

Mujeres Pescadoras Flor del Manglar (Manglar Flower Fisher Women) is another principal organization in my study.. This organization was created in 2015 as an initiative of an NGO called *La Ventana* based in Oaxaca City. When I first arrived in Zapotalito, I did not know about this organization so it was not part of my project. However, as I started to spend more time in the community, I realized it was another important all-women's organization in the region. Although their goal is not related to political and gender work, I argue that their work as cookers and fisherwomen (i.e., as a group of women who solely work on the organization of women as an economic project) is itself a political statement. Flor del Manglar is an organization whose

members are fisherwomen or their economic activity relates to the fishing industry. It is known as the first all-fisherwomen organization in the Coast and one of the only ones of its kind in the country. Members in this organization are Black, Indigenous, and Mestiza women. As part of the project, financed by national bigger foundations, such as *Fondo Semillas*[11], the women of Flor del Manglar decided to create a little restaurant serving seafood in the community, where fishers and tourists could eat freshly prepared food. The restaurant was located by the shore of the lagoons. I began to visit their restaurant and spend time there during the day periodically, while they were cooking, making tortillas, or just sitting waiting for clients. Later on, I started to build an interpersonal relationship with some of the members individually in the community, which helped to strengthen my ties to the community. Unfortunately, the restaurant ended up closing because it was not sustainable, and the women were not receiving enough income for living. However, the organization of Flor del Manglar still is active through other projects in the community; for example, they cultivate mussels in the mangroves or clean a canal in the lagoons that is connected to another body of water, so that it can have a source of oxygen.

Yolanda and Rosa are both members of the broader Black activist movement in Mexico, but they are also good friends. The allyship between AMCO and Colectiva Ña´a Tunda has created powerful activities and workshops in the Coast, such as the now annual Afromexican Women Meeting celebrated each summer in different communities around the region. In 2019, the last meeting happened in Corralero, Oaxaca, a community on the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 200 women attended, not only from the coastal area, but also from all over the country. There were collective workshops, talks, dances, music, and rituals. There was also a list of demands created by the Meeting to the Mexican State. One of the demands was the need for an immediate response and solution to the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons.

Black and Indigenous women experience common challenges: gendered, racialized violence and the subordination of their specific demands based on identity, experiences, and histories. Through their bodies, they transmit transgenerational knowledge, but also pain. As performance studies scholar Diana Taylor argues,"because it is impossible to think about cultural memory and identity as disembodied" (Taylor 2003,86). Black and Indigenous women also have a tense relationship within their communities because it is believed that women's demands can "hurt" the broader movement. As Andrea Smith argues, "communities of color, meanwhile, often advocate that women keep silent about sexual and domestic violence in order to maintain a united front against racism" (2015,151). Even if this also happens in the Oaxacan Coast, Yolanda and Rosa keep organizing to visibilize Black and Indigenous women's challenges in Mexico.

Yolanda Camacho talks to me about the importance of alliances specifically with Indigenous woman:

> Yes, because that Alliance we have with them (Indigenous women) its important, in some way they share what they have already lived and what they have already been through, because us as Afromexicans are just beginning. The first steps we are taking as Black women, they already as Indigenous women have already a well-traveled path, and even though they still have things to learn. (Personal Interview, May 28, 2018)

Yolanda recognizes the experience that Indigenous women have in Mexico while organizing against discrimination, racism, sexism, and classism. Yolanda sees an inter-ethnic alliance as an opportunity to learn from each other. In the context of necro-mestizaje, or the different life-threatening experiences of human and non-human, I explore different local responses and resistances to these forms of violence.

From Personal Grief to Grief as Methodology

In August of 2018, after a year of fieldwork in my home country, I returned to Austin ready to begin the final phase of my PhD, writing my dissertation. I was feeling excitement and ready to write, and I felt the inspiration and the strength to do it. I started the semester and enrolled in a class because I felt I could manage to take it. As part of my writing process, I set a weekly Skype writing meeting with one of my best friends from the program. We would come together through Skype for a few hours every Thursday to work and write together. Those were productive days. I felt that I was making progress in writing the dissertation. I was sure that if I maintained that work rhythm, I would finish the program exactly on time according to my PhD calendar.

One day in mid -September, while in the middle of the only class I was taking that semester, my phone started to vibrate in my bag. My mother was messaging me, I didn't think much of her texts. I thought she was just checking in and telling me how her day went, as she always did. I did not read the messages until the class was done. I was walking through campus after class when I finally read her messages. They were not the usual texts; they were exceptionally bad news. My mother had fallen ill and gone to the doctor, and the doctors sent her to get some extra tests on her liver. While we waited for the results, she asked me not to worry. She thought it was probably just a routine checkup. I tried not to worry, but my intuition told me something was not right.

After some days, the test results came back. My mom called me. Her voice sounded different. She told me the worst news of my life: She had been diagnosed with liver cancer. She was optimistic that the cancer had not spread through her body. I felt my heart jump out of my chest. I felt an intense heat throughout my body, a punch in the stomach, dizziness, confusion, and headache. My body was in shock. I felt it was a nightmare and this could not be real. Just a few

weeks earlier, I had been with her in my hometown of Puebla, Mexico, having lunch and laughing. She looked healthy, so how come in just a few weeks this was happening?

Pain of grief and the life-death continuum--emotions that were present in my fieldwork—becoame a part of my own personal experience after the death of my mother: a major loss in my life. Dána-Ain Davis and Christa Craven (2016)describe how personal experiences influence a feminist ethnography that "Life-altering events may also have significant impact on the ways that feminist ethnographers are accepted (or not) in the field, as well as the ways they think about their work" (D.-A. Davis and Craven 2016). My own grief and life altering event impacted directly my research from theorization to methodology and writing.

My personal and embodied knowledge allowed me to understand the connections between my own emotions and the reality I analyze in this dissertation. How, then, do shared emotions between the "researcher" and "fieldwork" inform our approach and understanding our politically engaged fieldwork? How do emotions, in this sense, become a bridge that partially erases borders between you and your research we research? Asking this question does not imply that relations of power between those who research and those who are researched are erased, but it does offer a new site of connection. Because of this, I write in an auto-ethnographic/prose narrative, wherein I reflect on my own politically engaged research and on what happens when the emotions I was researching become my own emotions.

After my mom was diagnosed with liver cancer, I decided to take a leave of absence from my university in Austin, Texas and fly to Mexico to be with my mother. At the beginning, after finding out the diagnosis, I thought it was going to be a painful, scary, and long process, but I wanted to hold on to hope. I was looking for a minimal ray of hope, because that was the only thing we, as family, had. Then reality hit hard. Doctors. Appointments. Trips. Medical opinions.

Anxiety. Rage. Sadness. Desperation. Confusion. Shock. Pain. Sorrow. The final diagnosis was disastrous. I felt like someone was literally ripping out the still beating heart out of my body: My mother had an advanced stage of cancer and there was nothing else to do. She had a very short period of time left. But how long is a short time? Time becomes equivocal and yet it feels like a drop of water in a dessert without an oasis when death is fast approaching. Every minute, every second, and every breath counts.

The days passed by and my mother was dying in front of me. Then it happened. The last breath. An image and a day I will never forget. October 19th, 2018, I felt honored to have witnessed her last breath on this earth. This breath was life and death simultaneously, occurring in the thin moment between life and death that endures only a second. In one moment, my mother was transformed into another form of energy. She was only 59 years old and I was 32. Life felt and still feels unfair. Needless to say, it has been the worst and most painful experience in my whole life. This feeling permeated and subverted my whole life. It was an event that destroyed me and I had to learn to reconstruct myself from the ashes. How is it possible that the person who brought me to life with such care and love, is no longer here with me, with us, at least physically?

The days passed and I felt and experienced what I have never experienced before: grief for a loss. Grief felt like unbearable sadness, anxiety, anger, even rage, sorrow, nostalgia, a deep painful hole in the stomach, my heart gone from my chest. Grief became my companion every day and every night. Grief in the beginning occupied my whole energy, body, and spirit. It consumed my energy. I was not in the capacity to do any other thing, besides grieving. As time passes, grief has transformed, but it is still present; it co-exists with feelings of joy, excitement, love, and pleasure. I know grief will be present for the rest of my life and it will be always changing. Grief

has become an ever-present and intimate company to myself, in different spaces and times. Even while writing this dissertation, some days I have to slow down and take time to process my grief.

Grief has been passed down between the women in my family intergenerationally. My maternal grandmother also died at a young age. My aunt, my mother's younger sister, died two years before my mother passed away. My mother grieved her mother and her sister, the same way that I am grieving her now. but I am also grieving the death of my aunt and my grandmother too. How much of this grief is accumulated and stuck to my bones and in my gut from past generations and ancestors? How do we heal, or at least reconstruct, an intergenerational grieving body?

We need a methodology of caring, where risks and insecurities are talked about as part of our preparation for fieldwork. This methodology of caring should speak about the privilege of the researcher, but also about the fear, the vulnerability, and the anxiety researchers can feel. We need a space where we can talk about our emotions during fieldwork without feeling ashamed, or feeling that we do not fit into the hero/fearless anthropologist. It is necessary for us, as women and feminized people of color, even if we are working in our own country (such as my case), to create a safe space where we can safety and network amongfriends. As part of this caring, we also need a space for processing emotions, especially from life-changing events.

Emotional Weaving

Once I was in a better mental and emotional state, which took several months, I started to work on my dissertation again. I continued my work as a way to honor my mother, my aunt, and my grandmother. It was an emotional engagement with my ancestors and as part of my political commitment to the Zapotalito community.

As I revisited my fieldwork data, interviews, photos, and notes, I kept remembering a question I would ask the people from Zapotalito: "How do you feel about the lagoon dying in front of you?" Or sometimes more generally, "How do you feel about the lagoon?" The answers would vary depending on the person and time, but in general, I found similar answers among the feelings and emotions of those I interviewed:. sadness, sorrow, nostalgia, anger, and rage. Suddenly, I realized that they were feeling the same things I was feeling with my mother's death—that is, the people in Zapotalito were in deep grief for the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon. Furthermore, the people in the community were also grieving the loss of members of their community due to structural and physical violence at the hands of narcotraffickers, and State violence, such as Patricia's loss of her murdered husband, which was mourned by the whole community. People were also grieving their own bodies, their own histories, and the territorial and embodied effects of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in their own community and land under the Mestizo nationalist country of Mexico (Hooker 2005a).

Zapotalito is a grieving geography for human and non-human loss, as I further explain in Chapter 3. The same way that my mother gave me life, the lagoon sustains life for the people of Zapotalito. To witness the death of a source of life is an experience that changes people's understandings of life and the way they live in many ways. Mourning for a life that is dead or is in the process of dying implies a physical, spiritual, and emotional response. I grieve for the body of my mother that is gone physically. People in Zapotalito grieve for a body of water that is dying physically because it is polluted, but also because it is stagnant water and gets drier as time passes.

When I realized that we shared a feeling of grief, taking into account different contexts and positionalities that I will discuss later, I better understood the frustration and sense of hopelessness felt by the people of Zapotalito. My own experience of grief opened a whole new sphere of

connection to them. It was only after I experienced the grief of losing my mother that I was able to understand the lagoon as a source of *life* for the community. Renato Rosaldo (1989), in his famous piece "Grief and the Headhunter's Rage," reveals how he understood the ethnographic site—rage and grief by Ilongot Headhunters—only after the tragic death of her wife. However, in this recount, grief is seen as a solved momentaneous action exerted by an individual, through the action of headhunting and a moment of expressing rage and grief. I explore grief not as something to be "expressed" through an individual action for dealing with the emotion, but rather as a collective continuous process that becomes an opportunity for political mobilization.

To the communities dependent of the lagoon, its death implies material, economic, social, emotional, and spiritual loss. Scholars like Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (2017) in their book *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss & Grief* discuss mourning and grieving for an other-than-human body because of ecological loss. The authors argue, "It is about mourning that resists the artificial separation between bodies than can and cannot be mourned. It is about asking what counts as a mournable body (and what does not)?" (2017, 3). The lagoons are a mournable body of water, as well as all the ecosystem that is at risk of dying.

My mother means home for me. My mother means ancestry, lineage, a sense of belonging and connectivity to my history and ancestors, and a spiritual connection. After my mom´s passing, I felt disoriented, disconnected, and lost. The Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoon, in the same way, means home, belonging, and a spiritual connection to the other-than-human and to the ancestors who have lived on the coast for hundreds of years. The lagoon means history to a place; it means a shared space and the creation of worlds and communities. This shared space around the lagoon is itself a reproduction of everyday life. As Braun argues, "mourning for the environment, in other words, shows what kinds of kinship relations we create and lose with our environments" (2017, 65). The

lagoon also means a connection between mangroves, fishes, mussels, shrimps, and birds that annually migrate there for a season. The lagoon means connection with different forms of life.

Zapotalito and the other communities surrounding the lagoon are grieving spaces, or what I call grieving geographies. If I had not lost my mother, I would not understand this as I do now. I could recognize people's sadness and anger, but I did not feel it as I do now.

When we employ activist research methods, we choose to put the mind, the body, spirituality, affect, and emotions at the forefront of our research. In other words, we commit to building a new common language between the communities we work with and our research, creating a whole new horizon of imagination and possibilities for the research and for the communities. I argue that shared emotions can also be a way of engaging with our research. Shared or similar emotions can become another methodological and theoretical approach to our academic and politically engaged work. Scholars, such as Shannon Speed (Speed 2006), Charles Hale (Hale 2001), Edmund Gordon (Gordon T. 2007), Aida Hernández (2015), Xochitl Leyva (Leyva Solano 2015), among others, employ or discuss activist scholarship, or *socially engaged anthropology*. Soyini D. Madison (Madison 2005) calls this process *critical ethnography*. However, in different ways, all of these researchers have argued about the importance and ethical responsibility of engaging politically with our work, and the necessity of aligning with political struggles and goals with the people and communities with whom we work. I believe that part of this social engagement can happen through affect and emotions, questioning and destabilizing the so-called objective research approach, or even challenging the fixed notions of what is considered politically committed research.

Emotions and affect do not erase power relations and hierarchies between the researcher and the community. Class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity, among other factors, influence

these power relations. These factors do not become invisible; rather, they are permanently present in all interactions and social encounters. However, I believe emotions and affect not only between humans, but also with other-than-human beings, is another way of connecting and theorizing.

Grief as a Seed

It has taken me a while to feel in peace again, and sometimes I still feel broken. People say grief comes in waves, and I have experienced it this way. On those days of deep grief, I have to sit with it and feel it in order to continue with my life. However, it has been revealing to me that the grief I experience has also become part of the healing process. Letting my body feel grief has signified a connection with my body at a deeper level and allows me to find ways of taking care of myself. Letting grief pour through my bones and skin has meant finding new paths for my life and, in a sense, producing life in new ways. Grief permits me to slow down, take care of myself, and to look for other ways to connect spiritually with my mother.

I find that in the case of the people in Zapotalito, their collectively grieving also includes an attempt to find alternative ways of taking care of the community and the lagoon. People around the lagoons also have to slow down and grieve, which helps them to recharge energy for further actions. The people from Zapotalito are organizing politically to demand a solution to the disconnection of the lagoon from the Ocean. They have visited state organizations and NGOS, and they even produced a human rights report about the situation. At the same time, women in the community have organized other forms of economic resources, such as weaving clothes, cooking, selling chicken, or handmade tortillas. Women in the community create networks of solidarity to take care of their children, share food, and take care of each other. Grief, then, gives a perspective

of the blurry line between life and death, and it brings to light how even in the presence of death, we can create and reproduce.

I argue that after this very personal experience, a new perspective came to my own research and understanding of other-than-human being relations. In this sense, I believe that in order to be politically engaged in research, while aligning ourselves with the communities we are working with, researchers also need to engage emotionally with these communities. I believe that emotions are political tools because they create a sense of belonging and a sense of collectivity necessary in the struggle for liberation and justice.

My own path through grief has been rough, but also it has brought me a sense of appreciation of life. The loss of my mother has signified my own symbolic death and rebirth. It has given me an enormous spiritual and healing path that I do not think would have happened otherwise. It has brought a new purpose in life and a deep commitment to my life and the lives of other humans and other-than-human beings. Grief provides a collective sense of nostalgia and fear for the future without a lagoon. Collective grief in the middle of fighting for land, water, and the survival of their own people, in the end, is a struggle for life. Grief becomes a seed for imagination of a future with a lagoon that will continue to produce life. Grief became my own seed for imagining my future self in new ways.

Dissertation Chapters

Chapter 1 begins with a description of my first encounter with women from different communities in the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca, and the ethical and political dilemma they asked me to consider as a future researcher in their region. I then explore the different forms of Black and Indigenous inter-ethnic alliances in Mexico and the concepts I am drawing from to sustain my

dissertation. I also discuss my positionality as a Mestiza woman in relationship to the communities I was working with. Finally, I engage with activist and feminist anthropology to argue how my own personal life changed my methodological and theoretical perspective through the emotion of grief.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons and Zapotalito. Through oral histories from elders in the community, I reconstruct the history of Zapotalito and the changes that happened since the ecocide started. I also explore the different ways in which the community has organized for collective good. I describe the ways in which national and international tourism, by a majority of White and Mestizo people, has fetichized the lagoons and the ocean as a tropical fantasy, further damaging the ecosystem and reproducing colonial relations with the local people. I examine the paradox of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons being a National Park and protected area for conservation, yet also a location that criminalizes Black and Indigenous people while permitting explicit forms of environmental damage from a transnational factory in the area.

Chapter 3 explores the intimate relationship of Black and Indigenous women with the Chacahua Lagoons, particularly through the emotion of grief. Local people experience grief for the loss of the lagoons but also the loss of members of their community due to narcotraffic and state violence. I propose a framework to understand the ways in which the mestizaje ideology creates grieving of racialized spaces. I also explore the ways in which Black and Indigenous women have organized through inter-ethnic alliances to produce life, and survive, and the ways in which they care for their community and for the lagoons.

In Chapter 4 analyzes how Black and Indigenous women are creating counter-cartographies to the whitening and spatial project of mestizaje. I analyze the origins and uses of maps and cartography as colonial tools for the creation of the Mexican nation-state. Then, through

a feminist geographic methodology of mapping, I explore how racialized women in the Coast of Oaxaca have an intimate relationship between their own bodies and their land, particularly, the lagoons.

Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which the ideology of mestizaje intersects with necropolitical practices. The mestizaje ideology has bodily effects on racialized populations, such as the feeling of fear. I briefly discuss the genealogy of the mestizaje ideology and the mestizo subject in Mexico, but also provide alternative readings of mestizaje in the United States, particularly from the Chicano movement. I then give an overview of the current state of political and social violence in Mexico, and how women, specifically, are affected by it, with alarming femicide rates. However, I also trace the critique that Black and Indigenous women have given to a mainstream white and Mestizo feminism in Latin America. I describe the ways in which Black and Indigenous women have created spaces of contestation against a gendered racialized necropolitical apparatus in the Coast of Oaxaca.

To conclude, I argue that the Mexican nation-state foundation through the ideology of mestizaje is more than an imagined community or an abstract idea. Even if ideologies of racial harmony erased from their narrative the existence of racism, mestizaje ideology continues to have material and palpable effects, particularly on Black and Indigenous populations and their lands. The elimination or annihilation of a land means the elimination of the population that inhabits it. Black and Indigenous women in Zapotalito have generated autonomous practices of survival, care, and solidarity against dispossession, racism, and violence. These everyday practices of resistance are not only against the ecocide of the lagoons, but also against the necropolitical apparatus hidden in the mestizaje ideology of Mexico. Furthermore, Black and Indigenous women are creating other

ways of life to establish a future for their families and to protect their land, their water, and their territories.

Positionality and the Contradictions of Space

When I arrived at the Coast of Oaxaca in September of 2017, I did not know what to expect. My first meeting with women from the communities happened one summer before, in 2016[12].Zapotalito was a new community for me; I had never been there and could not even picture it. For my first visit, I took an urban public bus from one the main beaches in the Oaxacan coast, Puerto Escondido. My partner and I decided to stay at a place in Puerto Escondido, and I would move between Puerto Escondido and Zapotalito throughout my fieldwork. There are several bus stations to assist my travel, so I only had to step onto the street and wait for as bus. The little bus, like a minivan, would have always an air conditioner and windows closed due to the high heat. The driver would play loud music, sometimes cumbia, ranchera, boleros, rock, bachata, or chilenas, the regional music. The trip from Puerto Escondido to Zapotalito was around 1 hour long. The bus left me in the middle of the main highway, and then I would run across the highway to get to the other side. There, I waited for a collective taxi to be full. Once the taxi filled, it would take us to Zapotalito.

I was born in Puebla, Mexico, a city two hours away from Mexico City. My parents were the first ones in both families who earned a university diploma. My maternal grandparents were farmers in the north of Mexico in a little *ejido*[13] called Ricardo Flores Magón. My grandfather cultivated cotton and some fruits. My grandmother was an elementary school teacher. On the paternal side of the family, my grandmother was a maid or housekeeper for a small hotel in downtown Ciudad Juárez, a border town. I never met my grandfather. Neither had my father met

his father. Until today, we do not even know his name and my grandmother never told my father. It is a big mystery who he was, where was he from, how he looked, and what was his name. It is a sad story for us. Even though my grandmother was a single mother, we feel there is a big hole in our family history. I would still like to know more or discover something about my grandfather. My father was raised in a lower-class neighborhood in the border city working as a market seller, shoe cleaner, and cigarette seller on the streets. Later, and with a lot of effort, he became a university professor. My mother, on the other hand, was raised in a farmer community, and later she studied to become an elementary school teacher.

I am a self-identified Mestiza woman, from a now middle-class family, and I have had the privilege to attend a U.S. university for graduate school. Being a Mestiza in a country like Mexico, where mestizaje was the founding myth of the nation-state, means that I am part of the hegemonic population. Even though in the context of the U.S. I am read socially as a woman of color, or as a brown light skinned Latina woman, I want to highlight how I experience my own identity differently in Mexico. My personhood does not suffer racism or classism in Mexico, because I am not a racialized body in my own country. It also means that I have a passport, and that I travel to other places if I want and can move freely between borders with no legal consequences.

My research primarily centered on women. As a legible feminine body, I had the privilege of entering feminine spaces and conversations that otherwise would have be impossible to enter as a masculine presenting body. However, the intersection of my race and class separated me from the women in the Zapotalito community. Women in Zapotalito have experienced classism and anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism their entire life, contrary to me. Even though I share the experience or comprehend better the grief for a lagoon through my own loss, the truth is that at the end of the day, I have access to food, health, higher education, and other resources with no worries

for my own life or my family. The shared experience of grief for humans and the other-than-human gives a sphere for partially understanding one reality, but it does not erase structural power dynamics and hierarchies of oppression. As researchers, it is our own responsibility to continue our political commitment to livable futures.

My positionality and my light skin are read as an outsider to the community in the coast of Oaxaca. This was obvious in some instances. For example, after I arrived to the crossroad with the main coastal highway in Zapotalito, I had to wait in the taxi site for more people to arrive. All the taxi drivers from the site are from Zapotalito, so they know all the people and the families, and eventually they knew me. In the beginning, they asked me where was I from, or if I was going to Chacahua, the touristic beach on the island. They assumed that I was a tourist. One of the taxi drivers one day asked me, "where are you from because you don't look you are from the region?" I told him I was from Puebla and he replied, "yeah, it makes sense, because here we are Black or have dark skin, and you are white." I was surprised by the word *blanca* and the identification of myself as White. I do not recognize myself as White, so I was in shock, although it was interesting to learn how I was perceived in the Coast and how the perception of my skin changes according to the context. I am a brown, light-skinned Mestiza, perceived as such in my hometown and other cities and areas of the country. However, in the context of the Coast, being a Mestiza or light-skinned is perceived as White. In some areas, though, people from the community would say that I had brown "clear" skin, plus my piercings and style of clothing were different, as I wore a lot of pants and big boots. I was clearly seen and perceived as an outsider from the city.

A big contradiction I felt throughout my research, even with the activist methodology approach, is the fixed colonial relationship of the ethnographic work, especially with me being a Mestiza middle class woman coming in a Black and Indigenous community. This contradiction

does not have an easy solution or answer, but the awkwardness of it made me more aware of the ways in which I was approaching my work. I decided I needed to talk about it with the people I was collaborating with, as I believe an honest dialogue is necessary. I explored this personal contradiction with Rosa and Yolanda by sharing with them my sentiment and thoughts about my own work. I asked them how they felt about me, as a Mestiza outsider woman, coming to their communities and doing my research, and how this reproduced colonial relationships not only because of my identity but also in terms of the colonial apparatus of Academia and Anthropology. Both women, in different personal conversations, expressed they understood my point that it was important to talk race and class. They told me that it was necessary for me to keep my commitment to political work to them, and to create research work that is accessible to them because academic language is complicated. Rosa told me that even if I am an outsider, I needed to help visibilize the problems in the communities through my work and that I had to use my privileges. Rosa joked about not wanting my dissertation to be used only as a physical base for her television, and that she did not want to have to use a dictionary to read my work.

The contradiction is not solved, and that is why I question the possibility or un-possibility of decolonial work within academia. However, I position myself inside this contradiction, within this crack between the contradiction as a methodology itself, because it lets me be constantly aware of myself, my work, and my relationship to the communities.

If I could think of a constant emotion I felt during fieldwork, it was fear. I was scared at many moments during the year I was in Mexico. This has to do with moving in different spaces as a woman without any company but myself. In the context of "war" in Mexico, especially for women, there are risks everywhere I go. As an ethnographer, going to a place by myself entailed

many challenges, because I am a woman and because I was a foreigner to the region. Fear was always latent in my body, ready to activate at any moment that I felt insecure.

There were rules in the communities that are not written. For example, when I wanted to live in Zapotalito and travel back to Puerto Escondido, my travel had to occur before the sunset. I could not go after dark because of the danger, so it was a better option to spend the night in Zapotalito. The route to go back to Puerto Escondido was the same. I had to take a collective taxi that pass through the only road of Zapotalito, which I shared with other people from the community. The taxi left us in the main road to Puerto Escondido, at that intersection of the road coming from Zapotalito and the highway that crosses the Coast. This intersection was always lonely, with open fields around. Only a few taxi drivers would wait for passengers. There were many times that I thought, if something happened to me while waiting for the bus to Puerto Escondido, no one would see because that intersection was in the middle of nowhere.

I sometimes felt fear while waiting because I was a lonely woman standing in the middle of a highway known for murders and disappearances. However, the women in the community always took care of me. They asked me to text them when I was returned to Puerto Escondido or to let them know how my trip was. Just like there are rules of risks, there are also everyday forms of taking care of the women within the community. For example, if I wanted to go to another house or another neighborhood that was far away and it was already close to dark, Yolanda or another woman made sure that someone was walking to the same neighborhood and would walk with me, even if they were kids. This happened mostly at the beginning of my stay in Zapotalito, because I barely knew anyone. I also was aware of my surroundings while moving about within the community and I never was outside after darkness. In the local news, I would hear about murders on that highway or the drivers of the buses I took being killed. After spending some months in the

community, it was easier to walk freely in the community because I knew people around the neighborhood. I always wondered if the women in the community took this measure with me because I was a woman or because I was clearly a foreigner. The foreignness I felt in the community, even in my own country, demonstrates the racial and class dynamics in Mexico. I was a foreigner in that community because of my privileges in the country. I am only a foreigner in little communities along the Coast; in the vast majority of the country, and in the big cities, bodies like mine are the dominant. For those from the Coast of Oaxaca, their Black and Indigenous bodies are read and treated as foreigners in the rest of the country. In particular, Black people are read as foreigners, because blackness was erased from history. Black people in big cities in Mexico, for example, are thought to be foreigners coming from other countries. However, in a country like Mexico, even with a privileged body like me, I am still just a feminine and feminized body that can be target of State, narco, and patriarchal violence.

Either way, even when I felt fear at some moments, I also felt very protected by the women in the community. Berry et al. (2017) discuss the problematic foundation of anthropology that assumes the universal White male as the researcher, and certain risks are not taken into account because of this privilege. The authors argue the necessity to start talking about gendered and racialized biases in fieldwork and the violences we, as women, can confront in our research. The balance of these two readings of my body while conducting fieldwork were the contradictions of the context and of my own subjectivity.

Chapter 2:

Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters: Life, Death, and Environmental Gendered Racialized Struggles in Mexico

Introduction

In September of 2017, the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons[14], which are located on the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca and which were declared a National Park[15] in 1937, had an eerie blue-green tone because the lagoon was dying: the water was stagnant, without oxygen. I arrived in Zapotalito – one of the communities next to the lagoons– just a few days after the earthquake of September 19th, 2017, which registered 7.1 on the Richter scale, and had its epicenter on the Oaxacan coast. One or two days after the earthquake, the lagoon was filled with dead fish and people woke up to a horrible ammonia smell. Celia, [16] a Black fisherwoman narrated the events on the day of the earthquake:

> I was out on the lagoon when the earthquake happened; we were fishing, but in the lagoons you didn't feel it too much. The water started to look like it was boiling, a lot of bubbles, as if something was being born from below. The water got very hot. It started to smell like sulfur. The third day after the earthquake the fish were dead. A lot of fish, like 10 or 15 tons, all the big fish died. (Interview, 17th April 2018, Zapotalito)

The fishermen and fisherwomen who go fishing early in the morning to the lagoons were the first to see the devastating scenario. It was impossible even to put a boat inside the lagoons; there was no space with all the dead fish. An announcement was made on the community's loudspeaker, asking the villagers to meet at the lagoons due to the emergency. But the massive fish die-off that happened in 2017 after the earthquake was not the first. According to a human rights violation report by *Defensoría de Los Derechos de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (The Ombudsman of Oaxaca, 2013), another massive fish die-off took place in 2008, and in 2012 there was another in

which approximately five tons of dead fish appeared. There are still no verified explanations for this devastating phenomenon, but people from Zapotalito told me they believed that with the earthquake, all the accumulated toxic gases were released from the subsoil and brought to the lagoon's surface, causing the death of various animal species in the lagoons.

I argue that a gendered and racialized "matrix of violence" (Hill Collins 2000) is killing the lagoons, producing grieving geographies. Building from literature around grief and ecological loss (Albrecht et al. 2007; Cunsolo and Landman 2017), and grief on social sciences (Halim Chowdhury 2007; Henry 2012; Maddrell 2016; Mitchell-Eaton 2019), I define grieving geographies as spaces of complex collective loss due to interconnected forms of violence, where the deaths of humans and other-than-humans[17] collide, creating compounding feelings of pain and sorrow. The loss of the lagoons and the loss of people from the community due to narco and state violence create a collective sense of grief among the community that is cyclical and unrelenting.

I explore the relationship between women's territories: their bodies and the environments where they live, particularly water-territory (Panez Pinto 2018) and the relationship between human and other-than-human bodies through the emotion of grief. This chapter adds to the literature around environmental racism in Latin America. I also seek to add to the study of the intersections in between race, gender and environment and to the literature of emotions and affect in political mobilizations.

Ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons

The degradation of the lagoons happened because of multiple factors. In 1972, the federal government built a breakwater in Cerro Hermoso, the community that is next to Zapotalito and that borders the Pacific Ocean, supposedly in order to stabilize the lagoon. Zapotalito's lagoon was

originally connected to the Pacific Ocean via Cerro Hermoso, which brought oxygen and life to the lagoons.

Twenty years later, in 1992, the government built the *Ricardo Flores Magón* dam to create a hydraulic channel from the *Río Verde* (Green River) to irrigate crops in the region, the dam diminished the direct water flow between the *Río Verde* and the lagoons.[18]

Image 1. Ricardo Flores Magón dam, San José del Progreso, Oaxaca. May 14th, 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

In 2001-2003, CONAPESCA (the National Commission of Water and Fishing) built two more breakwaters in Cerro Hermoso, supposedly with the objective of improving the touristic potential of bay, but also to benefit the fishing activities in the region[19].

Image 2. One of the breakwaters in Cerro Hermoso, Oaxaca. April 29th, 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

However, after these breakwaters were built, the lagoons were disconnected from the Ocean. As a result, the canal that had existed between Cerro Hermoso and Zapotalito is now a sand dune. Given the lack of response from the government in the past, local members of the communities in the region have tried to reconnect the ocean with the lagoons by themselves—using shovels to remove the sand–but it is an impossible task, given the amount of sand.

Image 3. Sand dunes in between the Pacific Ocean and the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons. May 5th, 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

A third factor, normally only named by the fishermen and fisherwomen, is the transnational private factory of lime oil located in the community of San José del Progreso that I described in chapter 2.

The Oaxacan coast is an agricultural region where papaya and lime are cultivated, among other crops. According to an environmental report and a personal interview I conducted with another local organization, *Ecosta Yutu Cuii*, agrochemical pesticides are used on these crops, which then drain into the lagoons. Inorganic salts and toxic chemicals from those pesticides can now be found in the lagoons (Ecosta Yutu Cuii S.de.S.S. 2000).

In sum, the current ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons is caused by multiple factors, combining State and private sector activities, but none of them controlled by the local communities.

Image 4. Dead fish on the lagoon shore. Zapotalito, Oaxaca. April 29th, 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

Mourning Waters

A main question during my fieldwork was, what did the people from the community *feel* when they saw the lagoons slowly dying? Each one of the women answered in the register of sadness, anguish, anger, and nostalgia. Some of them felt sadness seeing a lagoons progressively dying in front of their eyes. Others felt anguish to think they could not do anything to stop the lagoons from dying. Many felt anger because the government has not done anything to resolve the

situation. Two women in particular felt nostalgia for the old days when they could go fishing in the lagoons and come out with enough fish to eat well for the week and to sell.

For example, Martha, a fisherwoman remembers how the lagoons made her feel:

> When I was on the lagoon, I felt happy. In the house now I feel sad, but when I was in the lagoon I forgot about home, about all the problems I have. I love the lagoon, its islands, I feel sadness now when I see the lagoon and the condition that it is in now. (Interview, 16th May 2018, Zapotalito)

People told me, filled with nostalgia for the bygone days of the lagoons, about when it was full of fish, when it was connected with the ocean. Nowadays, only some of the fishermen and fisherwomen can go to the ocean and fish, as they need more gas for the boat, and gas is expensive; plus it is more dangerous and requires more fishing skills due to the strong water currents.

Maribel, for example, a fisherwoman who is also part of the *Colectivo Mujeres Pescadoras del Manglar*, told me that before: "When the bar between the ocean and the lagoon was open, the ocean would clean the lagoon water and many fishes would come to the lagoon, but now that the bar is closed, there is only stagnant water and that is why the water is dirty" (Interview, 9th May, 2018, Zapotalito).

Image 5. Chacahua- Pastoría Lagoons. May, 5th 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

Celia explained the difference between the problems faced in the lagoons before and after:

> Before, I could go two or three hours to the lagoon to fish and come back with lots of fish to sell and eat; now, everyone has to go farther and have to stay in the lagoon all day long. You have to earn not only enough for covering the gas, but also your day, and the gas is expensive. There are days where you don't even earn enough money for food, you come off the lagoon with nothing, not even with something to eat. (interview, 17th April 2018, Zapotalito)

Maribel and Celia grieve for the old days when they could bathe and swim in the lagoon. Nowadays, nobody swims. People are scared of getting a skin disease or another kind of health problem.

Valeria, a Mixteca Indigenous fisherwoman told me that the lagoon is the source of life and work for the people in Zapotalito: "The first thing I feel when I see the lagoon is sadness,

because it is our primary source of living; it is dying, sometimes when it rains, it helps a little, but if it continues like this, fish are going to disappear forever." I then ask her what would happen if the lagoon died definitively, and Valeria answers, "If the lagoon dies, Zapotalito dies" (April 22, 2018, Zapotalito).

I interviewed the doctor[20] in Zapotalito, and asked him if there were health issues related to the condition of the lagoon. He told me there were cases of skin abscesses reported occurring to the fishermen in the community due to bacteria in the lagoon's water. According to Ysunza et al. (2002), the first cause of mortality in the *Parque Nacional* is diarrhea and respiratory illnesses; the second highest cause, at 16%, is accidents such as drownings, traffic accidents, burns, etc. Finally, 9% of the deaths reported are due to stomach cancer that "could be related to the consumption of smoked meat, in this case, smoked fish" (2002, 259). Federico, a fisherman from Zapotalito also told me about the increasing cases of stomach cancer in the communities around the lagoon, although there is still no scientific research on the subject.

Beyond the slow death (Berlant 2007) of the lagoon, Zapotalito is also a grieving geography because it is on a narcotrafficking route, and consequently, there are cases of homicide and disappearance. People from the community grieve for the members of Zapotalito who have passed away due to health problems, but also due to violence.

Back when I was Zapotalito, in the spring of 2018, one day some fishermen discovered two dead men floating in the lagoon. I didn't hear what happened to the bodies, but I know people in the community were scared. People would say or assume that these men were probably connected to the narcotraffickers and that they had done something wrong.

Two floating human bodies, in a dying lagoon, connect the human and other-than-human bodies in another way: they are part of the same death. Suddenly the binary of human-other-than-

human bodies, as different kinds of living beings, become one through the lack of life into death-body-territory (Zaragocin 2019b) or into death-body-water, to understand the particular effects of slow death into body and water. These human bodies are dead because of a violent crime — homicide. Their bodies were decomposing inside the lagoon, just as the lagoon is decomposing. Similarly, the lagoon's dying is also a result of crime, human and State: ecocide. Ecocide and homicide in the same space and time. But what happens when these homicides are not isolated? Homicides and femicides are executed as punishment for racialized and gendered bodies that question the logics of State violence and capital (Lozano Lerma 2019). Every day on the Coast, there are news reports about people being killed in that region because of narcotraffickers, but there are also femicides happening in the region as a result of domestic and structural violence.

Racialized Slow Death/Violence of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoon

I draw on Robert Nixon's concept of *slow violence* defined as "a delayed destruction often dispersed across time and space" (Nixon 2013, 2) and Lauren Berlant's concept of *slow death,* which "prospers not in traumatic events, as discrete time-frame phenomena like military encounters and genocides can appear to do, but in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the presentness of ordinariness …" (Berlant 2007, 759).

Particularly in Latin America, I engage with Sofía Zaragocín's (2019) use of slow death to describe how Settler colonialism functions through politics of elimination in Ecuador towards indigenous communities and their territories, and María Moreno (2019), who describes the relationship between environmental racism and slow death towards Afrodescendants in the coast of Ecuador. I use slow death/violence to describe the particular mechanism of the mestizaje

ideology in Mexico, which denies racism, yet perpetuates gradual violence towards racialized territories and communities through policies of dispossession or by being complicit with pollution, toxicity and extractive tourism. Lorraine Leu (2020) in her analysis of racialized geographies in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, describes the ways in which an inter-ethnic and interracial neighborhood "mourned the loss of the place they called home that was sacrificed to the national civilizing project" (147). In the same way, Afrodescendants and Indigenous people in Zapotalito are mourning the loss of their land that is being sacrificed to the whitening project of mestizaje.

In other words, the ongoing ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons the communities face on a daily basis in the region around the lagoons, are the materialized and embodied effects of the ongoing whitening colonial project of mestizaje (Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. 2010a) and its relationship with neoliberal dispossession.

It is important to highlight that Black and Indigenous populations[21] have different histories and experiences with racism in Mexico and with the nation-State as a concrete entity of power. The racial hierarchies within a nation-state also legitimize who can occupy or exist in certain spaces or the access to natural resources (Mollett 2006; Delaney 2010).

The Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons are slowly dying through pollution, toxicity, and tourism as I explored on Chapter 2, and without lagoon, the population living around it will be either displaced or will have to migrate since they will not have access to their primary source of living.

As Christen Smith (2009) suggests, "the relationship between State violence and the fight for environmental justice are inseparable and should be examined in connection with one another" (95).When the state and transnational companies —embodied in a majority of white and mestizo, upper- and middle-class cis gendered men—are killing a lagoon and its ecosystem, they are not only killing the body of water and the land surrounding it, but also slowly killing the population

that lives there. Without the lagoon, there is no possibility of human life in Zapotalito, nor in the communities surrounding it. The lagoon sustains primary economic activities —fishing and tourism— and is also the natural resource that feeds the families in the communities; these natural resources are worth defending because as Mollett argues "natural resource struggles are also racial struggles" (Mollett 2006, 96).

I want to highlight that an intention of ecocide does not mean that there is no agency or resistance from the communities affected by it. Even more, it is in the body, the most intimate scale of analysis where we can understand how racialized human and other-than human bodies are traversed by local and global structures of power (Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo 2017; Agard-Jones 2013) and by colonial structures (Lugones 2008; Espinosa Miñoso 2014). These are bodies that exists in relationship to the other but also the space and land. However, it is also in the body where resistance begins. It is in the same body, in alliance with others, where the defense of life, solidarity and mutual aid begins.

The connection of what Indigenous women from Latin America call "body-territory" is inseparable, because, as Lorena Cabnal describes it, "body and territory are spaces of vital energy that must work in reciprocity" (Cabnal 2019,122). Sweet and Ortiz Escalante (2017) explore the intimate bond of *territorio- cuerpo- tierra* which is at once spatial, emotional, and spiritual. In my work, Panez' (2018) notion of water-territory is particularly useful to understand the inseparability of these two concepts: if there is a water conflict, there is also a territorial factor. A combination of body-territory and water-territory generates an intimate and reciprocal concept that Zaragocin names water-body-territory to further understand the slow death of racialized populations and their territories (Zaragocin Carvajal 2018). From Abya Yala, feminists have maintained that women's body is also our first territory. As Laura, a self-identified Afro-mixteca woman once told me, "We

know that as women, our first territory is our body, and we endure a lot of violence. If we don't know how to take care of our bodies, we don't know how to take care of others nor of Mother Earth" (Interview May 23th, 2018, Zapotalito). Astrid Ulloa uses "territorial feminisms[22]" to describe "territorial-environmental struggles that are led by Indigenous, Black, and peasant women and that are focused on the care of the territory, the body and nature" (Ulloa 2016,134). Black and Indigenous women from Zapotalito care for their body-territory in a complex relationship.

People from Zapotalito, Chacahua, El Corral, Cerro Hermoso, among others, have protested in multiple ways before local and national representatives, demanding solutions to the problem, regardless, to this day the situation keeps getting worse. One of the outcomes of these protests was a human rights violation report by the Ombudsman in Oaxaca in 2013, after members of the community of Zapotalito demanded it and helped create it. The situation of the lagoons was presented as a case during the 169th session of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2018.[23] However, after these actions were made, as we will see, actions from the state have not happened and the lagoon continues to slowly die.

Grieving Geographies, Mourning Waters, and A Radical Hope

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines grief as "mental pain, distress or sorrow caused by a loss." In a mestizo-centric nation like Mexico, there are bodies -human and other-than-human bodies- that are the target of slow death and, as a consequence, are grieved by their communities[24]. Another perspective to take into account is how, as Judith Butler argues, "some lives are grievable and others not" (2006, xiv). However, I would also like to ask: which human bodies have historically grieved their territories the most? Which bodies have more ancestral environmental grief? Which bodies —human and non-human— have been continuously dispossessed and

displaced in the name of colonization and capitalism? And which bodies have grieved more for their continued annihilation and the exploitation of their communities[25]?

Glenn Albrecht et al. coined the term "sostalgia" to describe "the pain and distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one's home environment" (Albrecht et al. 2007, 96). Furthermore, in referring to ecological loss and grief, Cunsolo and Landman assert, "it is about decentering subjectivities, healing environmental grief, and living connectivity and interdependence" (2017, 3).

As I have indicated, grieving geographies are spaces where grief is collectively felt because of an entangled loss of human and other-than human caused by interconnected forms of violence. I decided to use the gerund verb form of the noun grief—"grieving"—because I believe it is a continuous and cyclical state that does not end or have a specific starting point; rather, people learn to cope with grief over time, especially when historically, it has been marginalized and racialized people and territories who have borne ancestral grief. In this vein, it is a grieving geography through space and time.

Through grief, human and other-than-human beings communicate. The slow death of the lagoon is palpable and explicit in the condition of the water, the mangroves, and the animal species that live there[26] but also in the putrefactive smell. The death of this body of water -a lagoon-, is also connected to a different kind of body of water: the human body[27]. Both are bodies of water in different forms. The human population is feeling grief and sorrow for the destruction of their land and water, but also of their own population by violence. The lagoons and the land are also experiencing grief, through the slowly degradation of its ecosystem. The lagoons then also become an active other-than-human being that generate effects on its water and fauna. Humans and non-

humans communicate in interrelationality (Deloria 2001; TallBear 2017), or as Stacy Alaimo calls it, through "trans-corporeality" across "various bodily natures" (2010, 2).

I argue that grief is an anti-capitalist practice, as it forces you to slow down and feel; it goes against the rapid machinery of capitalist time. As bell hooks describes, "...to cling to grief, to desire its expression, is to be out of sync with modern life, where the hip do not get bogged down in mourning" (Hooks 2001, 200). While feeling grief, there is the conception of another time that centers slowness and not productivity. While grieving, and I am speaking also through my own experience with grief, people need space for processing their emotions, to feel their emotions through the body. Grief occupies a lot of emotional and physical energy, so slowness becomes the way to live and exist. This slowness of existence through grief permits to also concentrate in the immediate reality: what to eat, what to work on, and where to invest the time. Grief then becomes a time to center the existence. Grief becomes the witness to the existence of Black and Indigenous communities, because grieving people are centering their own emotions and the sensations in their bodies. In this sense, grief becomes an insistence of a presence, a refusal to the non-existence of themselves and their land and water. Through grief, the insistence of presence of Black and Indigenous communities in a country that historically has negated their existence becomes palpable. Grief becomes an act of refusal to the negation of existence. The lagoons are also refusing to be annihilated by continuing to produce aquatic life.

A grieving geography also can produce mobilization, because grief is accompanied by rage, sadness but also hope in the case of a lagoon that is not entirely dead. A grieving geography is a target of multiple forms of violence, but also this grief bears seeds for insurgent acts and creates everyday strategies of resistance through care and reciprocity. The fact that Zapotalito and other communities are grieving a still alive and not completely dead lagoon means that there is hope.

There is hope for the lagoon to be healed, for the lagoon to survive the ecocide. This grief and hope combined fuels the political mobilization not only in mainstream legible forms, but also in illegible forms of politics through actions of everyday care, solidarity and mutual aid in the community. In this sense, grief creates potentiality for organizing because people are embracing the radical hope of the survival not only of the lagoons, but also of their communities.

Grief Politics: Women Defending Life as a Care Practice for the Community

Although their waters have become a space of death, women in Zapotalito consider the lagoon a source of healing and life. Viviana tells me that once she is in the lagoon in her boat, while fishing, she feels calm. While she is in the lagoon, in the middle of the water, she can take moments to think about her life, to have space and time for her own reflection. Raquel, another fisherwoman, told me when I asked her of her relationship with the lagoon, "I spent my whole pregnancy inside the lagoon fishing: there is where my belly grew." Viviana and Raquel have a special bond with the lagoon: their bodies connect to the water; their human bodies — which also contain water— interrelate with the body of water, a lagoon.

While there is a collective feeling of grief, there is also a feeling of resistance in the everyday lives of people to survive. Grief is felt for a lagoon that is still in between life and death. It is grief that becomes a catalyst, a "wave maker" to mobilize in defense of life not only of the lagoon, but of their families and community, it is grief politics.

The resistance becomes visible via two strategies: One of these is more visible, and goes with what we generally think of as political mobilization, for example, people of the community —mainly men— organized collective visits and protests in Oaxaca City to ask the government for solutions, or to produce reports of the environmental damages with local human rights NGOs.[28]

The second strategy is the everyday forms of resistance that would not be read as political, but yet is: the sustenance of life in the community mainly performed by women, like cooking food, making tortillas, cleaning the house, taking care of children, taking care of domestic animals and plants, occasionally fishing for family consumption. Celene Krauss asserts that "in certain moments, the environmental knowledge derived from mothering work shifts from the private to the public arena as women became activists in order to preserve their families and communities" (2009, 71). The domestic work and care work that women do in their everyday lives shifts to community and land defense work. I argue that these everyday actions performed by Black and Indigenous women are deeply political because they are a matter of survival. Keisha Khan-Perry discusses the invisibility of Black women's activism, and how they are "uniquely positioned" because "they serve as primary mediators of familial and social relations within their communities, influencing political decisions and how important resources such as land are distributed" (Perry 2013, 15).

Men and women[29] have different roles in the community that they build collectively every day, but they also have distinct experiences within the community. Gladys Tzul Tzul proposes the term "differentiated inclusivity" to describe that Indigenous women, along with Indigenous men in communities, work together to "conserve the material base of the livelihood and collective wealth, however, they live differently the communal life at the interior depending on the gender they have" (Tzul Tzul 2016, 174).

Men in Zapotalito are mainly the ones who go to the lagoon to fish, although there are still a good number of fisherwomen. Men give tours to tourists in the lagoons, or have already migrated to other cities in Mexico or the U.S. looking for better conditions of life. Although in Zapotalito both men and women defend the community and the lagoon, inside the community they have different experiences of public life: men occupy more public jobs and attend community

assemblies regarding the lagoon. Since men are usually not in the community during the day because they are fishing, they go out at night to talk with each other on street corners.

Within this context, Zapotalito becomes a community of mainly women during the day. The women stay in Zapotalito to take care of the families, while also caring for the community, the land and the water. Women in the community are in charge of survival in the midst of an ecocide, so they have to create new forms of income and access to basic needs. In this sense, there is a strong tie between the intimate activities of women at home with collective life in the community. Although they may not be considered overtly "political," the daily strategies of care and solidarity can be still read as collective organizing. For example, when women go to the mill every day to grind corn, they meet and talk with women from different families about what is happening in the community: the problems, the news, the feelings, and the thoughts.

The invisibilized domestic work that is not seen as political but yet is political because it entails the survival of the people; as hooks describes, "...homeplace is a site of resistance" (1990) because it is where the "social reproduction of life" takes place (Federici 2010). Domestic work is invisibilized by the capitalist system, because it is a work that does not receive a salary (Federici 2013). However, as Tzul Tzul discuss, "women reproduce life, and they structurally sustain the community weaving" (*trama comunitaria)* (Tzul, Tzul 2016, 191). Black, Indigenous and poor mestiza women are key to communitarian political organization because they are defending it by caring for human and other-than-human life.

A moment where women in Zapotalito meet collectively is around noon, when some mothers prepare food collectively for their children. Then, some of them walk together to the middle or elementary schools to bring food to their kids at the recess time. During their walk together, the women leave their house or work routine, and talk about their intimacies, their lives,

their problems, their feelings and thoughts; it is a moment of sharing, of not feeling alone. Walking together is also a measure of safety, of taking care of each other in the middle of a violent environment. Practices of collective reciprocity and care are political because it is in these practices that the community continues to function regardless of the violent context, they are in.

While I was working with the organization *Colectiva de la Costa Ña´Tundaa´* in Zapotalito, Yolanda, the founder of the organization, was leading initiatives to help women have other sources of income, while facing the economic crisis with the slow death of the lagoons. For example, it was Yolanda´s idea to create a workshop for knitting traditional clothing. Yolanda recounts:

> Well with the despair of women too, and me thinking, what are we going to do now? What are we going to eat? And what are we going to fish? I invited women to organize ourselves to do a job, so the first thing that occurred to me was …well we are women and women tend to embroider, to sew, so I invited them to that we make necks, it is a handmade neck where it is manifested a meaning of animals like crabs, shrimps, fish, scorpions, because it is the context of us like Black women in the Coast. I spoke to them and now we are like ten women. They began to do collars and necks, and blouses, and each blouse is around 500 to 800 pesos ($25 to $40 U.S. dollars). (Interview, 23rd May, 2018)

Yolanda then thought of creating an embroidery workshop, where women would weave local and traditional clothing to sell to tourists or friends from outside the community. I was present when women[30] arrived to Laura's home for the workshop. This new group of women was not only sharing stories and feelings, they were actually producing alternative modes of earning money for survival, that is, they were creating a community alternative economy or source of income. This alternative economy was going to help women feed their kids and families or help them with urgent matters. These are only some initiatives that Yolanda was organizing in the Coast of Oaxaca, specifically for racialized women. For Yolanda and other Black leaders in the coast like Rosa María, it is important to have these spaces for women in the Coast, so it can open new opportunities

for women but also it challenges the mestizaje ideology or necro-mestizaje (that I will further discuss in chapter 4), by enabling new alliances and challenges to sexism, racism and colonialism.

During my fieldwork in the community, there were many social events like particular birthday parties, weddings, or events organized by schools, where almost all the attendees were women. I want to highlight that moments of collective joy and rest, where women get together to dance, or just even to eat and talk to each other, spaces where they are not working but just enjoying the moment area form of resistance. Public and collective joy and rest in the midst of an ecocidal environment is deeply subversive, because is in those moments that women also occupy and recover public space (Monárrez Fragoso 2011) to reinforce community, reproduce the social life, find hope and to feel accompanied.

Another way women are defending their land and territory in their everyday lives is by using medicinal plants they grow in their yards, or that are found growing wild in the region, including *moringa*, and *muitle.* By growing these plants or using them in medicinal forms, women in the community are reproducing life and literally taking care of their health and their families. Medicinal plants are another way of interacting with the environment they live in, by having deep ancestral knowledge of the land, the power of plants and caring for the life of plants and trees in their communities.

The other local collective of women in Zapotalito,[31] *Colectivo Mujeres del Manglar,* was a project created by an external NGO where women could have access to additional economic and monetary resources. The original project was to create a collective of women who had been fishing in the community; however, due to the slow ecocide of the lagoon, there was not enough fish to sell, so women from this collective had the idea to open a restaurant where they could cook for the fishermen and tourists who arrived in Zapotalito. They opened a restaurant close to the lagoon's

shore, where they would take turns in pairs cooking and serving. They would stay there and cook food, but also make tortillas for local families. *Mujeres del Manglar* would use this space to organize workshops for other women and themselves in Zapotalito. The women were worried about not selling enough and the restaurant eventually closed. *Mujeres del Manglar* started another project to clean the canal of water that connects with another lagoon called *Palmarito*, so that the Zapotalito's lagoon and its ecosystem would get oxygen. *Mujeres del Manglar* went to the canal in a boat, and they spent several hours there, unblocking the passage of water that gets clogged with wood, rocks, etc. This was a practice of care and reciprocity with the dying lagoon, because fisherwomen were trying to give a source of healing —oxygen— to the water, the fish, and other-than-human beings. As Zoe Todd argues, "we need to start treating fish as kin and more–than-human persons, we have reciprocal duties to is a necessary step in reorienting our relationship to land, water, space, stories and time…" (2018,74).

During one of our interviews, Celia told me something that was very meaningful and that described the affective connection between human and other-than-human, between a fisherwoman and a lagoon:

> We have to take care of the lagoon, we need to have love for the habitat that we live in, because if we keep it going like this, in the future there is not going to be anything, no water, no fish, no trees. I always say, when you have self-love, you have love for everything, but if you don't, you also don't care about life and your surroundings. (Interview, April 17th, 2018, Zapotalito).

Celia knew the affective, loving interaction and interrelationality between human and more-than human. I find useful Zoe Todd's concept of Human-Fish relations, as "a micro-site of engagement" because "fish stories bind us to the waters and lands we move through and inhabit- bringing our lives into direct relationship to fish as political actors, other-than-human beings, and kin whom we owe reciprocal responsibilities" (Todd 2018,72). Love for the more-than human, and self-love, is

as understood by bell hooks when she says "love informs decisions, strengthens our understanding of community, keeps us together" (Hooks 2001, xxvii). Examples like these show us the potentiality of practices of care and reciprocity in the community as performed by women in their everyday lives. The practices of care between women, like walking together or sharing food for their families, create solidarity because it brings them into a space not only to accompany each other, but also to produce material benefits for their families that enable survival and the continuation of life in the community, the land and the water.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that there is a grieving geography produced by an entangled loss of human and other-than human beings caused by interconnected forms of state, narco, racialized, gendered, and class violence, among others.

The loss of their environment or land, as some authors have described (Cunsolo and Landman 2017; Braun 2017; Albrecht et al. 2007), intertwine with narcotrafficking, and state violence that annihilates racialized and gendered people and their territories.

Black and Indigenous women, along other members of the community, grieve[32] the lagoon and the land because it is slowly dying in front of them but they are also grieving the members of the community that have died because of Narco violence. It is a grieving geography of different human and other-than-human bodies of water.

Faced with ecocide, women in Zapotalito are trying to create strategies of survival not only for their families, but also for the lagoon and the land. These earthly connections of human and more-than human bodies, also bring us to reflect on what it means a connection in between human and more-than human death. Death is a constitutive event of life; there cannot be life without death

and vice versa, both are mutually engrained, and yet, death could be considered a other-than-human event. However the death event is not abstract, it is materialized in concrete particles of existence that are palpable; it is materialized in the bodies. The lives of Black and Indigenous people are racialized, therefore, death is also racialized (Sharpe 2016) . This means the causes of the death not only of their bodies but also of the land they inhabit, are deeply rooted in historical systems of oppression.

The human and other-than-human have an interweaved relationship: racialized bodies are killed or disappeared, but the land and the lagoon are also suffering the same acts of violence. It is important to explore the idea of what it means to grieve something that is not fully death, rather, is slowly dying, but yet it is still alive. The anticipated grief of a lagoon not only means slow death of fishes and mangroves, but also the witnesses that inhabit the communities. However, anticipated grief also brings motivation to mobilize and fight for it, instead of a complete death, when resignation and the necessity of moving on is installed. The fact that the lagoon is still alive means that there are possibilities of survival and recovery, it means there is hope. This hope is what maintains Black and Indigenous women caring for their community, for their families, and for the lagoon. The hope created by grief is what politically mobilizes the community to continue to denounce and demand solutions from the government, and to continue reproducing life in Zapotalito.

Grief, in this sense, becomes a fuel for political mobilization, an insistence of the presence of Black and Indigenous communities in Mexico. Black and Indigenous women create interethnic solidarity by organizing self-managed alternative economies, sharing feelings and thoughts between themselves, as well as through the domestic and community work they perform everyday.

In the midst of grief, these practices become embodied experiences of mutual care and feel-thought for themselves, the community, the land, and the bodies of water.

Chapter 3:

Zapotalito, Chacahua and the Tropical Fantasy of Tourism in the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca

The communities around the lagoons, fueled by grief, have organized to defend their land and water. Black and Indigenous people face environmental racism, by being invisibilized and not heard on their demands to the government for a solution even if their livelihood and life itself are at risk. Furthermore, there are other forms in which the environmental degradation is supported by the government, for example, through the implementation of tourism in the region.

This chapter explores the tensions between federal and National Park designations for the lagoons' water and land use and the traditional water and land uses of local people who live around the Chacahua lagoons. Specifically, I argue that the state intentionally criminalizes and demonizes Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo people's traditional land and water use as part of the mestizo national project. Based on oral histories I collected from elders and community members, I describe the everyday life in the community of Zapotalito and the importance of *tequio*, an autonomous and community-based form of organization. It is essential to understand how locals interpret their history and its relationship to their territory, land, and the lagoons. It is also essential to understand how development—specifically international and national tourism in Zapotalito, the Chacahua lagoons, and the Chacahua community—have affected the everyday life of the humans and non-human beings that live there. In 1937, the Mexican State designated the lagoons as a National Park. This designation also make the lagoons a tourist attraction. Tourism in the Chacahua region has produced a painful irony. The Western ideal of pristine nature has become a commodity fetish for tourists coming to Chacahua. Upper and middle-class White and Mestizo tourists are attracted to the region for its natural purity, but that attraction leads to the

environment's pollution. Moreover, the Western ideal of pure nature erases the intimate relationship between the fishers of the community, the lagoon, and the land.

I also describe the damaging impact of the lime-oil factory on the lagoons and the irony of conservation. The Chacahua-Pastoría National Park claims to take care of the environment. Yet, the state's conservation policies and state actors allow the factory to throw toxic waste into the lagoons. Local people have denounced the situation; however, there is fear of death-threats from talking "too much." This adds to the idea that within this racialized territory, multiple structures of powers become convoluted, as State and organized crime threaten the population and land and serve as an apparatus of *necro-mestizaje.* I further explore this topic in Chapter 4. Through acts of mutual aid and solidarity building, women play a critical role in the community's efforts to conserve the environment and preserve and produce everyday life in Zapotalito in the face of this specter of death.

Tequio: Zapotalito

Zapotalito became a community project born out of collective work known as *tequio*. *Tequio* is an ancestral, Indigenous, non-remunerated communal work that each member of the community owes to its collectivity. Tequio is a form of organization, independent from the Mexican State and government. From schools, to roads, to electricity, people in the community acquire a responsibility of work for the common good of Zapotalito. This ancestral political organization is still used in current times when problems arise or there is new needs to be met. In a region that is marginalized from the mainstream, the local people have created alternative ways to organize their life, aside from the State-centered-politics. Fishers founded the Chacahua community in the 1970s when they began to visit the area to fish in the lagoons. To get to this

island there are two routes, either by boat through Zapotalito, or by bus through another community, tourists usually just take the boat, and local people use the bus. Zapotalito is a relatively new town around the Chacahua lagoons. Before the community was formally established, people would pass through other communities in the nearby area to get to the lagoons. Now the town of Zapotalito is home to approximately 1200 people.

Some of the elders from the community remember Zapotalito as a land full of trees and plants around the lagoons: a territory between two mountains. Flavio Díaz, a community elder known as "Karma," and a self-identified Black ex-fisherman who now works as a tourist guide, tells me about the early days of Zapotalito and the reasoning behind its name:

> Oh well, there were no houses here, all was plain. Just my house and another man´s house. I liked it here because there was water, the lagoons. Here there were a ton of *bejucos* and *zapotillos*[33], a little tree that produces the fruit of zapote that is very tasty, that is why the community is called Zapotalito. You would have a lot of those trees here. We used to go with my wife to get lots of zapotillos and eat them. (Personal Interview, May 7th, 2018)

Karma remembers the plain land of what is now Zapotalito, full of fruit trees and no one around. The foundation of Zapotalito was gradual and entailed a lot of collective work. The few families that founded Zapotalito organized themselves in order to have access to basic needs, such as education and health services. Melchor Gil and his wife, Gilberta, describe the importance of *tequio*, for the foundation of Zapotalito and the steps needed for having access to the community's basic needs. It required a lot of organization, trips, negotiation, and paperwork with the Oaxacan government. They explain,

> First, the school was built, and later the agency was built, and so on, all with tequio. It was organized through different responsibilities: you are going to be the president, you are going to be the police, you will be the topil, and so on, to be able to manage the agency. In order to build the government office, we had to flatten the land because yes, at first, it was a virgin land. Where the elementary school is, there were large forests. Back in the day, we were very united, because tequio was mandatory, everyone had to collaborate. (Interview April 19th, 2018)

Melchor and his wife remember the importance of tequio for the foundation of the first schools and local government. Tequio was central for the organization of the community, and it still is today.

Melchor also remembers the tensions they had with the National Park Administration when people in Zapotalito needed to build a highway in order to improve the community's accessibility. Back in the day, the only entrance to the town was through Cerro Hermoso. Tensions erupted because Zapotalito is inside the National Park's "federal protected area," so the authorities were against the construction of a highway. After this conflict, local people took matters into their own hands and blocked the Coast's main highway in order to be heard. Melchor recalls there was an altercation:

> We were there striking on the road and *SEDUE*[34] arrived, and women were at the front and they grabbed Javier (the administrator of the park at that time). The women took him out of the car, but Javier came with his escort and gave orders to shoot the crowd. I thought it was going to get bad. But on the other side there was another corporation[35] to defend us, and they did not dare to do it. There was an agreement, and they gave us an opportunity to do the highway. There were army soldiers there. There were struggles that were made to achieve what Zapotalito is now. And from there on we have been fighting. Each member did its work. (Interview April 19th, 2018)

As Melchor describes, each member of the community is important for the collective, but also for defending their land and territory. Tequio is used as a form of organizing to subvert the lack of government services, but also, when needed, protests arise.

In the community, access to basic services and living needs is limited. It is common for the electricity to go out, especially after or during storm season, which happens in between the months of August and October. Phone and Internet access are limited as well and not all people have these services. One way to have access is to buy "fichas," or chips. These are sold at the only Internet-café in the community for a low amount, which permits Internet access for a limited amount of time, from thirty minutes to one or two hours. Usually, people use it for their phones so they can

access social media because a lot of the communication they have with family and friends outside of the community is made through Facebook. In the beginning, when the community was just founded, there was only one Catholic Church built with palm trees. Now, there are several churches and different Christian denominations, such as Christian, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Pentecostal; and each one of them gather in specific buildings designed for the specific group, or in someone's home. People in the community have different gatherings and festivities throughout the year pertaining to their own religious practice.

In Zapotalito, there is one kindergarten, an elementary school, and a middle school. According to Karma, the creation of these schools was achieved thanks to the community's activism when they first founded the community:

> Look, because we were already living here, we went to *Tutu*[36] to ask for a teacher. When I arrived here there was only an improvised classroom made of palm trees, so we asked for a teacher. Then, we went to Oaxaca because we wanted a classroom, and the president of the committee, Pancho Fuentes, was the one that organized this. I was a member of the committee too, and we got the first classroom built. We did one and later three more. We build them with our hands. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 7, 2018)

Karma described the community organizing process to get resources from the government to build the school in Zapotalito. However, the community members were the ones who built the school with their own hands, as the government did not help.

If people want to continue pursuing education, they need to go to Río Grande, a town that is fifteen minutes away from Zapotalito. However, even if the two different high schools in Río Grande are free, the transportation from Zapotalito is costly for the families. A student has to take a collective taxi that costs fifteen pesos from Zapotalito to the "cruise," a spot that is ten minutes away from Zapotalito, to the intersection resting in between the road to the community and the main highway that crosses the Pacific Coast. Then, from the cruise, students need to take a second taxi to Río Grande, which adds another fifteen pesos. Thus, the total for a one-way trip is thirty

pesos, or sixty pesos per day (about three U.S. dollars), resulting in a three hundred pesos total for a five-day school week (about fifteen U.S. dollars). This quantity is insanely high considering that the Mexican minimum wage is roughly four dollars. For this reason, many of the people in Zapotalito are only able to attend middle school and then start working in the lagoons soon after they graduate, either fishing, engaging in the tourism industry, or, in the case of women, helping their mothers at home and performing the care work of their quotidian activities.

Zapotalito only has one small health center. It is a public community center that depends entirely on the government. The doctor who works there changes every year, since they are all medical school students performing their mandatory "community service" in order to graduate. The only nurse there has a stable job, because she is part of the regional nurse and health union. Even if her presence brings some stability to the town, the yearly change of doctors is challenging for the people because they have to get used to new personalities, approaches, and schedules. Doctors are supposed to live there, in the community, and their housing is next to the health center. However, many of the doctors come from the city of Oaxaca and do not like to live in Zapotalito, so they end up visiting a few days per week, which leaves the community without health services during the rest of the week. According to some people in the community, the doctors tend to engage in other racist behaviors and attitudes towards the locals. Doctors mistreat them and their comments can be explicitly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous. Some of the local population prefers going to the nearest hospital in Río Grande if they are experiencing more complicated health issues, but the health workers there also mistreat them. While I stayed in the community, the current doctor was a young 26-year-old medical student who the community liked better due to the racism of the previous intern.

Some locals experience more serious health problems, which require them to travel to Oaxaca City. For example, one of the fishers in Cerro Hermoso was diagnosed with cancer, so he was forced to take a bus with his wife to Oaxaca. The trip took approximately ten hours from Cerro Hermoso and additionally required numerous expenses, such as transportation, food, and lodging. As of this writing, health access in Zapotalito and around the lagoons continues to be difficult and limited.

Zapotalito is a community that, since the beginning, used the political autonomous organization of *Tequio* to collectively build the community and continues to do so for example, in actions that has to do with taking care of the lagoons and pushing against the ecocide that is happening.

Everyday Life in Zapotalito

A typical day in the community starts around 5 or 6 AM. Local people wake up, warm up some water for coffee, and eat cookies or make some eggs. After breakfast, some people, the majority of whom are men, start heading to the lagoons to fish before sunrise. Other men drive to the papaya fields at the entrance of the community, while the women stay in the town. Women cook for their families, for their husbands and for their children, and prepare the latter to go to school. Once women are "left alone" at home, they boil the corn they prepared the night before. The women then walk to the mill closest to their home, usually managed by a neighbor. While the corn is ground, women wait there and talk about news in the community. Once the dough is ready, they go back to their houses and prepare home-made tortillas. For this process, they grab some fresh wood they previously cut from the lagoons or other communities, and light it under their clay

comal. [37]They begin rolling little balls out of the corn dough, which they then press using a metal circular press. Finally, they put it on the comal to start warming them.

Since many of the kitchens are in open spaces, these areas become community spaces. Sometimes women get together while cooking and talk and help one another. Usually, the older daughters of the family help their mothers in the kitchen. While one is doing the tortillas, the other one places some tomatoes on the comal in order to prepare a spicy sauce. The kitchen becomes a space for talking, laughing, crying, and sharing everyday life concerns and joys.

Later, women start cooking the food that they will bring to their kids during recess time. Some take the lunches to the kindergarten, while others take it to the local elementary school or the middle school. Because the middle school is farther away, women organize themselves to walk together. This becomes another space for them to talk, rest, accompany each other, and defend themselves from any possible threat or danger. Once they arrive at the school, they look for their children during recess and deliver lunch. While the kids play and eat, the mothers gather at a table under a tree with the teachers. In a way, this also becomes their recess time. Once the recess is over, the children return their plastic Tupperware and any other utensils they used to their parents and then go back to class. The women then walk back to their homes.

After they return to their homes, the women begin cooking for their families who will return home after school and work. Sometimes, women who are neighbors cook together for their families, and they even share food expenses. In between 1 PM and 3 PM, all the children are back home and the family finally seats to eat together. Usually, for lunch, families eat fresh fish or chicken, alongside tortillas. In many cases, only the mother and children eat together. After school, children help with cleaning the dishes or taking care of feeding the farm animals. Some families have chickens and pigs that they sell or eat. They take care of the animals before selling them, or

they end up as meat for the family or are saved for a big party. After lunch, the women start preparing the corn that will be used the next day. They boil the corn with *cal*[38] and this process is called *nixtamalización.*[39] Dinner usually consists of coffee, cookies, and sometimes eggs. People in the town shower at night before bed since the region is hot and humid.

Fishermen and fisherwomen in the community stay in the lagoon for several hours, trying to fish different species that they can sell and eat. They will come back to the town around 1 or 2 PM to eat what they caught, or they save it for future selling. Sometimes, you can see some fishermen walking around the community with a small cart full of fish or shrimp, which they sell to local families. In other cases, they take it home and the women begin processing it for sale on the Coast. For example, the typical preparation of fish involves drying it with salt. Before this, they take out the guts and clean it so it can dry under the sun for several hours or even days. Other times, the fresh fish is placed in a plastic recipient and covered with a large cloth. Women who are fish sellers carry the recipient on their heads and visit different communities. This is hard work because the containers are heavy and they have to walk for several hours. Sometimes buses refuse to pick them up because, according to the women, drivers complain about the fish smell. Fisher sellers come back to Zapotalito around 4 or 5 PM to eat and rest. Women come back with their feet swollen and they have to place them in hot water so they can withstand the next day of work. Before the ecocide started, fishermen and fisherwomen only fished in the lagoons because this was enough for selling and feeding their families. With the current slow death of the lagoons, there is now fish scarcity and some fishermen are forced to fish directly from the Pacific Ocean.

However, fishing at sea is not for everyone, as fishing skills are different for the lagoons and for the ocean due to the differences in the force and rhythm of the water. Those who fish in the Pacific Ocean are supposed to have more knowledge of the ocean and have better swimming

skills. Still, there have been cases where even those fishermen who are ocean experts were close to getting drowned. Fishermen who fish in the Pacific Ocean also need better boats, with more powerful motors, which require more money for gas. They have to fish a good amount in order to justify the expense. There are many fishermen and fisherwomen who do, at least, two rounds of fishing per day. For example, they go in the morning and in the afternoon, but there are others who fish during the night and spend all-nighters in the lagoons. They bring lamps with them for the darkness and a good blanket because they say it gets really cold at night.

Fishermen and fisherwomen work in teams of at least two people per boat, so they can help each other with fishing, carrying equipment, or just being aware of the surroundings and the weather. Even though the water in the lagoon is usually calm and relatively steady, storms can be dangerous because they increase water movement and it becomes difficult to maneuver and see through the mangroves under heavy rain. Sometimes the teams come from the same household. For example, father and mother, or father and one of the children, or just a mother with their children. Other times, it is just one person per boat, but with other boats nearby. In this sense, fishing itself becomes a collective activity. Either in the lagoons or in the ocean, fishermen and fisherwomen accompany each other to help one another in the fishing activity.

Nostalgia for the land and the water is continuously present in conversations about the lagoons and what the area used to be like before the ecocide started. Through nostalgia, there is a direct affective relationship between humans and other-than-humans. It is through nostalgia that grief for the lagoons is also expressed.

Carlos Chávez, a self-identified Mixteco, and another elders and founder of Zapotalito, shared with me, with deep nostalgia, the overabundance of fishing in the past:

> Back in the day, we would each go fishing with our *panguita*[40] and with a hook and a rope, grab the fish in the lagoons, big fish, up to 30-50 kilos each. In the rain season, from June

> to October, we could never sell shrimp because there was too much, we would fish it with *tarraya*[41] up to 120-150 kilos.

Carlos contrasts the affluence of the past with the present moment:

> The shrimp only come to grow in the lagoons, once they become adults, they return to the sea. Right now, if someone gets 10 kilos of shrimp that means a lot, because normally it is only 3 or 4 kilos. Fishing is lacking because the water break is closed. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 3, 2018)

As explained by Carlos, the quantity of fish that fishers could catch before the breakwater was closed was vastly different from the amount they catch today. The difference is approximately less than 10% of what they used to fish. This obviously has direct repercussions on the local families, as well as impacts their immediate access to food. For this reason, many of the fishermen that once dedicated their lives entirely to fishing, primary for consumption and commercialization, have progressively abandoned this labor and have now shifted to lagoon tourism as a primary source of income.

For example, Karma narrates:

> First, I was crab fishing. When I first started fishing, I was entirely dedicated to bass because that left more money. I was going a expand with a motor and then with a rowing machine. And when the bass ate the snook, I would put the *trasmallo*[42] over the water and the next day I would get up and already they had caught snook. I would fill the cooler up to the brim. Even if it was raining, I would stay all night. Then my engine broke down and I couldn't work anymore as a fisherman, so I went to Huatulco to work in tourism. And from there I got the idea of ecotourism. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 7, 2018)

In the case of Carlos, he's another story of someone transitioning from fishing to selling coconut handcrafts:

> I stopped fishing because there were too many problems. First, the boat engines are very expensive, they come from the U.S. Second, the nets are expensive too. Finally, fishing is going down with the breakwater problem. Then, I said to myself, I am going to do other things because we are not going to be able to live from fishing since it will eventually end. So I decided to do other things and thank God I don´t make much money but I have fun and I and my family get to eat too. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 3, 2018)

Felipe Quiroz, an indigenous Chatino descendant, describes the lagoons before and now:

> Zapotalito was very different. The mangroves were beautiful, the water was clean, with lots of fish and birds. There was everything. I used to fish at that time and there were so many species. But now the number of fish dropped in an incredible way. Before with just a small net, you could get good results and fish a lot of kilos, but today you need a big net and get very little fish. Fishing these days has been severely decreased. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 16, 2018)

Nostalgia also is connected to the past life they had, before the ecocide, where fishing had good results and people were not worried about their economy. The ecocide of the lagoons has affected their whole community organization, but also impacts their most basic need: to eat.

In the everyday life of Zapotalito, people find collective spaces for discussing the problems of the community or to update each other about their lives. During the day, Zapotalito becomes a mostly feminized space, because almost all men go to fish or to work in the crops. During the daytime, women take care of the household, the children, and the community in general, such as when they clean the streets. Women are in charge of feeding, cleaning, and taking care of animals, if they have and, and some of them also go to fish in the lagoons and come back to continue with domestic work. The labor of care that women do in Zapotalito is also expanded to the lagoons when they clean it from trash in the shores.

There are other problems that Zapotalito faces. For example, a man from the community once told me that the lagoon is a paradise for trafficking drugs. At night, when everyone is at their homes sleeping, Zapotalito turns into another place. At night is when all the traffic happens. Little planes throw packages of drugs into the lagoon, and local people in their boats pick them up and then move them to the land, where they are distributed to other places. I personally never witnessed anything like this during the time I lived in the community. I knew there was something happening during the nights. Every day, around 7 or 8pm, when the sun goes down, Zapotalito becomes a mostly public masculine space. There are almost no women or children outside. Even Yolanda would tell me not to go out after its dark. The few moments where I was outside at night was when

there was a community party, and I could see the masculinization of the space. Groups of men were outside drinking, smoking, listening to music, and some of them drove their cars very fast through the main road. This happens because men usually are fishing during the day, or in the papaya fields farming or giving tours. The night becomes a space for gathering and relaxing. However, some people in the community were afraid of the narcotraffickers presence during the night.

Chacahua, National Park, and Ecotourism

The island of Chacahua has become a very important place for both international tourism from the Global North and national tourism. Local people have capitalized on this by building huts or little cabins for tourists to rent. Families have also built palapas, a type of huttos made out of palm and wood, that sit in front of the ocean and serve as "restaurants" for tourists. The unique aspect of this tourism industry, compared to what you can find in Cancún or Los Cabos or even in Huatulco on the Coast of Oaxaca, is usually classified as "alternative tourism." Citlali Rodríguez (2019) characterizes this as tourism for "hippies" or "*güeros.*[43]" That is, these tourists generally "have a quirky outfit, unkempt appearance, and that sometimes have a pattern of long stays in the communities" (Rodríguez Venegas 2017, 102). This "alternative tourism" flourishes in places like Chacahua for a few reasons. Chacahua is famous because of its big sea waves during certain seasons of the year. Thus, surfers from Australia, the United States, and Europe come to this beach. Moreover, Chacahua is characterized by not having big hotels or luxury resorts. The food and lodging are cheap, even for Mexican prices. There are only small cabins, huts, or areas for camping on the beach, and restaurants tend to be small.

Since the lagoons are the passageway to Chacahua island for tourists, local people from Zapotalito and other communities organize boat trips to the island to earn money now that the fishing is not as lucrative as it used to be. Every day, mostly men wait by the shore of the lagoons for tourists to take a boat ride. Some of them offer private tours, including a view of different little islands around the lagoons, and provide explanations of the bodies of water. Others offer a cheaper collective travel fee, but tourists have to wait for the boat to be completely full. Besides these transportation options, local people from Chacahua and other communities near the lagoons use a smaller boat at a cheaper price, although some tourists know about this and sometimes use it as well. That said, this smaller boat will only take you halfway. After drop-off, you need to take a small truck for another 45 minutes through a dirt road until you get to Chacahua. Regardless of the way people choose to get to Chacahua, Zapotalito and the other communities are socially and environmentally affected by tourism.

People feel attracted to Chacahua because it is a little island with almost no Internet or phone signal. In other words, tourists visit Chacahua looking to disconnect from their urban lifestyles. Local people who previously lived off of fishing have been affected by the ecocide of the lagoons and now seek to create alternative economies related to tourism, such as cooking, selling handcrafts, or organizing travel tours.

These conditions construct the tropical colonial fantasy of Chacahua as an isolated and remote island in the Pacific Ocean. As Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe argue, “ideals of pristine wilderness are used in NGO fundraising appeals…. Sometimes they succeed and sometimes they fail, but this does not change the fact center of the way in which most westerners imagine nature” (2008, 1029). The problem with colonial visions of wilderness is that “it does not give room for people in nature” (Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008, 1110). Tourism has created new forms of

ecological and social violence in the region, intensifying the exploitation of natural resources and racializing the community in order to create a colonial, tropical fantasy. As Pratt argues, "outposts of empire attract people in search of displacement, of renewal or escape, of adventure, experiences unavailable or withheld at home" (2016, 561). Tourists feel attracted by an image of Chacahua as a space that is different and "exotic," compared to their normal lives. Ecotourism, in this sense, becomes a continuum of nature and racialized geographies for the consumption of The Global North, as well as the elites of Mexico.

Upper and middle-class White and Mestizo tourists are attracted to the region for its natural purity, but that attraction leads to the environment's pollution. Moreover, the Western ideal of pure nature erases the intimate relationship between the fisherpeople of the community, the lagoon and the land. However, tourism has created complex contradictions because it is also a source of income for the majority of the families around the lagoons. The Chacahua wilderness has become a commodity to be sold, and although there is room for people to live here, it is mainly viewed as a space for White and Mestizo middle and upper-class tourists to visit the National Park. There is no room for people native to the land. It is an imperialized geography that reproduces ideas of nativism—a *mestizo geography*, as I argue in Chapter 3. The essentialization of the Indigenous population and local people as an imaginary and fetish of White outsider tourism is part of this geographic landscape (Alexander 2005). According to Davidov and Büscher, "ecotourism . . . is often used to legitimate further capitalist expansion, both in general and specifically regarding capitalist expansion into nature" (2014, 5). International and national tourists experience their tropical fantasy, while they reaffirm the green project of capitalist exploitation.

Spring Break, Summer, and December are the main seasons where the community fills with tourists. In fact, the area becomes so crowded that tourists sometimes are unable to find where

to stay and they have to improvise, either by camping, or sometimes asking local families to accommodate them. During these seasons, tourists organize parties on the beach, where they consume alcohol and even drugs. A distinctive aspect about Chacahua is that it does not have local police enforcement. The island has community police made up of locals from Chacahua who take turns to patrol the area. In every community around the lagoons, there is a small "jail" for people who commit minor crimes or offenses. In the case of a major crime, the community is forced to call the state police. Usually, these small jails only retain the people for a couple of days.

White and Mestizo upper and middle-class tourists using drugs and alcohol, and organizing parties constitute a colonization space. Simply put, tourists do not care about respecting the local population's social norms and territory. Tourists impose their way of life, without caring about the aftereffects that locals experience while living in their ancestral land. Foreigners colonially occupy the land "the tourist sees without seeing and the local is seen at all times, without being seen" (Michiko Hori 2016). In this sense, local people also become part of the exotic backdrop of outsider's consumption practices.

The existence of drugs in the community of Chacahua has attracted tourism, but local people are worried and angry about this situation. They fear the circulation of drugs on the island and inside the community. One day, on a boat trip I took from Chacahua back to Zapotalito, the boatman started talking to me and the other tourists on the boat about this drug issue. All the tourists on the boat, including me, were White or Mestizo, and the boatman offered us a joint of marihuana, which some started smoking while we crossed the lagoons. The boatman explained, "Don't worry, the police don't come here so we can do whatever we want." Tourists were laughing while taking puffs from the joint. The boatman then pointed out something that perfectly described the situation of Zapotalito, "Don't worry about Chacahua, in Chacahua there are only drug use,

hard and soft drugs, but there is no crime there. However, I can tell you guys that it is very different in Zapotalito. The narco is in Zapotalito, where cocaine and other drugs are distributed, so it is there where you have to be careful." I got really nervous after he said this, given that I was living in Zapotalito and I was scared of being recognized as a person who was actually living there. I was worried about my personal safety, but I did not say anything. We docked at Zapotalito and all the tourists took collective taxis to go to the community entrance where public transportation can take them to Puerto Escondido, one of the biggest cities and tourist spots on the Oaxacan coast. I just started walking back to Zapotalito, hoping that the boatman did not see me.

The boatman pointed out that, due to tourism, Chacahua became a "safe space" for drug consumption, while violence and narcotrafficking remained in Zapotalito. Zapotalito has become a liminal site: tourist boats travel through Zapotalito but tourists do not actually spend time there. This aforementioned scene describes how Chacahua, as a tourist spot, is somehow a protected zone for White and Mestizo foreigners, while local Black and Indigenous people face everyday drug violence in their communities. However, there also have been instances of crimes committed in Chacahua.

For example, the first time I ever went to Chacahua, I was with Yolanda. We took the boat for local people and then the truck. We went to see two women who had a project associated with a farm of chickens on their land. Yolanda was going to help them build the project. We used to go visit them in their house, talk about the project, and we ate with them. While talking to them, they said that in 2011, a young student tourist from Mexico City went to Chacahua for vacation and disappeared. They never found him. Some people think he was killed.

Chacahua, then, becomes an imaginary tropical fantasy for White and Mestizo people, where they can "disconnect" from the world, experience a "relaxing" vacation away from their

cities, all the while ignoring the problems and violence occurring in the local town. This town makes a place where nature and racialized people, and their territories, are exploited for tropical desire. Nature, including the lagoons and the Pacific Ocean, becomes a commodity for tourists, as well as an object for consumption—an ideal paradise where "problems do not exist" for the tourists, while the people who live there become invisible. This is ironic, given all the structural, political, and environmental violence experienced by humans and other-than-humans in their everyday lives within that same space. Tourism, in this sense, becomes another variable in the colonization of space, one where race and class hierarchies are reproduced. Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo people serve middle and upper-class Whites and Mestizos who vacation there. As Michiko Hori (2016) argues, local people are "forced to become the caretakers" (684) of the foreigners, while at the same time reproducing colonial and racial structures.

Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons, National Park, and Land Tenure

On July 9th of 1937, President Lázaro Cárdenas declared the "*Sistema Lagunar Chacahua-Pastoría*" a National Park, the first one ever declared in the country. The Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons National Park is approximately 13,274.169 hectares or 51.251853 square miles (Roqué Fourcade, 2013). The declaration of the Chacahua-Pastoría National Park of 1937, published in the *Diario Oficial* (Official Diary of the Union), clearly notes the value of the park as a tourist attraction. This section of the Chacahua lagoons as a national pak accompanied the state's identification of the region as a potential tourist area.

> Considering that the region is known as Chacahua Bay, as well as the lagoons of Tianguisto or Salinas, Chacahua and Pastoría, including the forests of Charco Redondo in the state of Oaxaca, are places of exceptional beauty, as a consequence, it is a powerful attraction to tourism that currently constitutes a source of wealth in the country and for the surrounding towns of the National Parks.

The declaration describes the beauty of the land, but uses it as a springboard for tourism and commodification. In this sense, nature, by itself, represents surplus-value to the Mexican state, which results from tourists visiting the Park. The lagoons and the forests, then, become profitable and available natural resources for capitalist exploitation. The official declaration of the National Park also states:

> Considering that the round puddle tropical forests, in addition to their important biological and hydrological role, are a refuge for the local fauna, whose ruthless persecution has been so intense in recent times that some species, such as the jaguar, the tapir, the puma, longtail and multitude of birds tend to disappear and that the waters of the lagoons to which reference has been made contain fish species of great value, it is necessary to propagate and rationally exploit the surrounding towns in order to improve their deficient diet. (my translation)

After becoming a National Park, the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons came under the jurisdiction of the now-defunct Ministry of Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, alongside the Treasury and Tax Office. They established explicit rules governing how much fish, wood, and general natural resources the local people could use for their own consumption and to sustain the local economy. The Mexican state describes the use and consumption of local fauna by the surrounding communities and towns as "ruthless persecution," and declares this fauna should rather be protected by the National Park. By using these words, local activity is framed as criminalization and demonization rather than honoring traditional knowledge and practices.

The other interesting phrase used in the above paragraph is "in order to improve their deficient diets," which refers to the surrounding towns and their population. On the one hand, the declaration states the need to "rationally exploit" fish from the lagoons, which lawfully limits local fishing. On the other hand, it assumes that the diet of locals is deficient. Even though the structural conditions of Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo populations surrounding the lagoons maintain marginalization and a lack of access to basic human rights, the reality is the diet of the people of

the lagoon was balanced and healthy before the ecocide started. In fact, this is one of the main reasons in favor of defending the water and the land. The communities had access to fresh and healthy food from the lagoons. The notion of a deficient diet reflects the views of White and Mestizo Mexican people from the urban cities of middle- and upper-class origins, who reproduce ideas of backwardness and underdevelopment about Black and Indigenous communities. That is, these elites reinforce colonial notions of diet that are traversed by capitalism. The colonial idea is that the more you spend on food, the more you are supposedly "healthy." Even colonial and capitalist notions of "organic" food are just expansions of green capitalism, while people in many communities do have access to fresh food, without it needing to be labeled as such.

In 1988, the government declared that National Parks are protected areas. Additionally, in 2008, the Chacahua Lagoons were recognized by the Convention of Wetlands as a Wetland of International Importance because it is a habitat for waterflow[44] and because of its rich fauna (Roqué Fourcade 2013). Supposedly, the purpose of all these policies was to protect the lagoons and the environment. However, these policies also meant the territory was declared federal property and local people only have "virtual" or symbolic property over the land.

Article 27 of the Federal Constitution states, "The waters, the territorial seas are property of the Nation in the extension and terms established by International Law, as well as the interior marine waters, the lagoons, and estuaries that connect permanently or intermittently with the sea, the waters of the inland lakes of natural formation that are directly connected to constant currents" (My translation). Even if we read this constitutional article as a declaration of federal ownership over the land, the law mainly refers to the lagoons and the water. This is complicated when it comes to the actual land surrounding the lagoons and the Pacific Ocean, where local communities have historically lived.

On April 8th 1996, the local government of San Pedro Tututepec, which is in charge of the Chacahua-Lagoons territory, enacted a law to gain control over the lands around the lagoons. The Agrarian Unitary Court declared that the 10, 371-47-98.90 hectares of land in the National Park are recognized and titled in favor of San Pedro Tututepec, as *bienes comunales* (communal goods). The sentence was limited because reserves are still under federal jurisdiction and under the major laws and limits of protection and conservation of the National Park declaration (Roqué Fourcade, 2013). Thus, even if there is a declaration of *bienes comunales* over the land, the territory is still considered a federal resource and is subject to enforcement regarding any legal violations.

In an interview with the Director of the National Park Lagunas De Chacahua, she told me that local people do not possess any kind of document of ownership over the land. According to Edda, the Director, the definition and law of National Parks forbids for people from living on any land considered a natural protected area; therefore, land tenure documentation cannot be provided to local people. Edda explains:

> When Lázaro Cárdenas arrived here 80 years ago, there were already tiny human settlements, they were fishing villages. What several of us that dedicate to conservation say is that the national parks were born with ¨original sin¨ because they were created through a law that determines there should not be any human settlements, but there were already human settlements, and as a species, we reproduce quickly, so now there are several towns. (Interview, 22, May 2018)

Image 6. A description of the National Park as a site of conservation in Zapotalito. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

Edda explained that the solution to this contradiction was to define and limit the population centers in regard to what areas of the National Park they can inhabit. People who inhabit the land, in the words of the Director, "vow to not 'invade' further areas of the National Park." Edda observes how, in a specific community of the Coast, El Azufre, she was involved in the declaration of these population centers and the reasons why the law forbids people from living in the National Park. Edda states:

> The law says that settlements are not allowed here because they are flood-prone areas, and high-risk areas, but because people did not have any other place to go, they stayed and went to places far from the cities. Nobody came to this area and told them to leave. When I did the documents for the population center, the local people from El Azufre were aware that they are in a high-risk area, for example, there was a hurricane, and it swept all the community away. It is an irresponsible act, because you are putting a house in a place that you do not know if tomorrow or in 5 years nature will disappear abruptly, and when those things happen, then local people say ¨government, help me, government, save me¨ and you have to do it. (interview 22 May 2018).

She further explains:

> So not only are they illegal, well, now they are legal because within the population center area, but they are criminals for eating iguana, cutting mangrove, etcetera, all within the National Park. And do you think I am going to enforce the law on them? No. That is why there are negotiation tables, but people get into a type of dynamic when they are going through a problem, but once the problem passes, they forget the agreements we signed. (interview 22 May 2018).

In regard to the use of land by local people inside the National Park, the Director states:

> The only thing about possession is that it says that even if they are inside the national park, they cannot continue to build more houses, so they do not respect the agreements. And if they loot the park, I know it is out of necessity, so the government has to provide them alternative productive activities. (interview 22 May, 2018)

The words of the director of the National Park are interesting. First of all, the National Park's political imaginary was built on the basis of banning a population from living inside the park, even though Black and Indigenous populations were living there before the federal declaration. This, again, speaks to *mestizo geographies* by the Mexican State that seeks to occupy traditional and ancestral land—a topic I will further discuss in Chapter 3. Claiming that the federal government is the sole owner of the land dispossesses the local population.

Local people do not have documents that protect their territory, so people are constantly in fear of displacement: As one fisherman told me, "if the federal government one days decides they want to build big hotels and tourism in the area, they can dispossess us and displace us with the power of law, and we would not be able to do anything legally." This threat of displacement, that is, the threat of the mestizo geographies, is very real to a lot of local people who feel that because they do not legally own the land, they could be forced to leave.

The fact that the Director of the National Park calls people building settlements in high-risk areas "irresponsible" reflects a neoliberal perspective of conservation. While the state-funded conservationist movement implements policies to "protect" the environment (all for the

consumption and exploitation of the environment by national and international tourists), local people who have lived in the area for centuries are seen as irresponsible even if they have a deep knowledge of the environment, fauna and flora, the water, and the land where they inhabit. People in the community already know the best seasons for fishing and what quantities can be taken without altering the environment and the ecosystem. Thus, this is not only a matter of protecting the environment, but also a question of survival. This survival includes local communities having enough fish to eat. Other forms of local knowledge exist, such as how the community has self-organized in times of natural disasters like the massive death-fish in 2017, or on how locals have organized to clean the lagoons and cultivate mangroves and mussels.

The National Park director uses the terms "invaders," "criminals," "illegals," and "looters" to refer to the local Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo people who have lived around the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons for centuries. These words demonstration the perpetuation of the use of colonial language in the present. Portraying Black and Indigenous people—who have lived in these lands before the creation of the Mexican Nation-State—as invaders or illegals demonizes them just for maintaining their way of life on their ancestral lands. In this sense, "conservation is increasingly implemented through coercive means and local populations are positioned as invaders and environmental destroyers" (Loperena 2016, 187). The criminalization of Black and Indigenous local communities racializes and stereotypes this population.

National Parks, then, become a mechanism for colonizing the land and imposing rules for its use and ownership, as "nature" becomes the priority. Meanwhile, the government has not taking into account the necessities of the local people who inhabit these geographies. As Brockington, Doffy, and Igoe argue about the relationship of conservation and capitalism, "they are about changing attitudes to wildlife and landscapes, introducing markets and commodifying nature,

about adapting tourists' expectations, and tourists' hosts, and about modifying societies and communities that live close to valuable nature" (2008, 309). Even if at first, we could think of the project of National Park as a way of protecting and conserving the land, these policies have also direct connections to neoliberal ideology, capitalism, and colonialism over ancestral lands.

Lime-Oil Factory and the Irony Behind the Status of Federal Protected Area

There is an irony behind the creation of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons National Park in 1937: while local people are restricted, surveilled, and criminalized for their use of natural resources, big transnational corporations are legally protected when violating local conservation laws. The case of the lime-oil factory located approximately 45 minutes away from Zapotalito, in San José del Progreso, is one prime example. The U.S.-owned factory called *Primus Citrus* produces large quantities of lime oil every day for the manufacturing of cleaners and detergents. According to the official report45 *Racismo Ambiental-Institucional en México. El caso de las comunidades del sistema lagunar Chacahua-Pastoría en Oaxaca* (2018) by COPERA46 and Inti Escalona, and presented to the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights, the Mexican government gave legal permission to the factory two decades ago to operate in the region. The production of lime oil, through a chemical process, demands the extraction of juice from thousands of limes. The waste from this process is dumped around the factory. According local residents, the highly acidic waste goes directly to a canal that is connected to the lagoons, which severely pollutes them.

The factory is located over the main highway of the Pacific Coast. Every time I passed through it while on public transportation, I could smell a penetrating putrefactive odor. The smell reaches San Jose del Progreso's downtown and other nearby neighborhoods. One time when I was

visiting San José del Progreso, I asked a resident about the smell. He responded by saying the smell was horrible and they have to tolerate it every day, but they cannot complain to the government. When I asked him why they were unable to protest or voice their concerns, he used his hand to mimic the slicing of his neck. In other words, whoever talks could get killed.

The fear of talking "too much" about what is happening in the lime-oil factory but also about the ecocide in general, reflects the everyday forms of necropolitics that operate on the ground. People can mobilize to a certain extent to denounce solution to the ecocide, but they also know they could be at risk of being killed. The *fear* by local people operates as a form of control that limits communities form organizing further. Fear, then, becomes a tool by necro-mestizaje to continue dispossessing racialized communities without consequences.

Carlos, a self-identified mixteco who was also one of the first members of the Zapotalito community, for example, expresses fear of talking too much about what is happening with the lime-oil factory:

> We know that PROFEPA has actually done some actions, but when they begin to send the factory legal documents, the factory changes of owner. From what I remember, they have at least changed like 5 times the name. That *gringo* is crafty. I'm no longer in politics because is scary too, right? It is dangerous to say things that one knows. I know clearly that the factory is the culprit of much mortality of fish and mangroves, and the lagoons are the source of living for us. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 3, 2018)

Carlos now prefers to stay out of "politics" as a way to protect himself and his life. He characterizes speaking out about what the factory is doing as dangerous, because it could create a life-threatening situation. Fear operates as a protector for Carlos, but also as a *modus operandi* from the higher power to immobilize the population.

Some weeks before I left the coast after finishing my fieldwork, I decided to check the area around the factory in order to try and find the canals where the waste is thrown. Yolanda and her husband decided to accompany me in their truck. They told me we had to finish the trip quickly

because it was risky to be seen. We went early in the morning and I had the chance to take some photos. The scene I witnessed was shocking. The canals and soil around the factory were covered with thick black-brown mud and swarms of flies were flying around. The smell was unbearable, and the waste was present in different portions of the soil, including directly on top of the dirt and earth and over what looked like water canals.

Image 7. Land next to the lime-oil factory, May 14th, 2018. Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

Image 8. Waste of the lime-oil factory in a water canal, San José del Progreso, May 14th, 2018, Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

Image 9. Waste of the lime-oil factory in a water canal, San José del Progreso, May 14th, 2018, Photo taken by Meztli Yoalli Rodríguez Aguilera.

I asked the director of the Parque Nacional Lagunas de Chacahua about the effects of this factory on the Lagoons. She replied with this statement:

> Yes. The water of the lagoons is polluted, maybe, even if the breakwater was open, these fish are not to be eaten, but it is only a hypothesis. Well, this factory throws acid in large volumes. I think we should even put a sign near the tourist route in one of those canals that read "this is where the currents of waste begin."

I asked her if she thinks the acid is corrosive to the water, to which she responded, "Yes, even if nature can restore itself, these are high volumes of acid waste. I believe in science, but also in common sense: you smell that and say, 'this is not right.'" When I asked if, as a federal office of a National Park, she and the federal government can do anything legally against the factory to stop the environmental damage it is causing, she claimed that the National Park has limited jurisdiction, and the factory is outside of it. The only thing they can do is issue a technical report on the effects of the factory over the lagoons.

Local elders from Zapotalito know the effects that this factory has on the lagoons. Carlos Chávez described the current state of the lagoons and their relationship to the lime oil factory:

> Right now, the lagoon is sick, it is green, it smells bad, there is a lot of lamas that stick to the nets, it is very ugly. The fishers get welts, it stinks because it is water from rotten things. When there are hurricanes, even if they are bad, they are good for us because it puts a lot of water in the lagoon and uncovers the water breaks. There is no one who stands against that company. When I was fishing, I would go to SEMARNAT, PROFEPA, so they would go against them because they are polluting the environment. If one says something about it to the municipal president he says: 'that is not my issue, it is SEMARNAT's.' Imagine that, it's not up to the municipal president? Of course, it is. (Interview, Zapotalito, May 3, 2018)

Carlos points out the steps that local authorities take to purposefully avoid confrontation with the lime-oil factory, and the shift or denial of responsibility away from multiple government offices. Carlos's description of the lagoon as sick serves as a metaphor for the slow murder of the body of water that sustains their communities. Flavio described waste being sent from the lime-oil factory to the canals that reach the lagoons:

> The other day we were in Palmarito[47] when they released the black water. They release it when it rains, when the stream is growing, but this year they screwed it up because the stream did not grow up and they still released it. Because they have a lot of waste, they reserve the tanks and have access to the streams, because they have pipes. They open the floodgates and then the waste comes. Every year they change the owner, if they realize they are having a legal demand, then they get a new owner. The factory also changes its name and that's how they do it. (Interview, May 7th, 2018)

Flavio and Carlos both describe the disastrous effects of the lime-oil factory on the lagoons, and how, through the changing of name of the owners and the factory itself, they manage to not be legally fined or challenged. While local Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo populations are constantly being surveilled and criminalized for their use of the land and water, international capital is allowed to damage the environment directly and they do not face any consequences as they continue to generate profit from it.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the dynamic and complex geography of Costa Chica in Mexico as a region with multiple Black organizations and political mobilizations. I have also explored how Zapotalito and tequio have been a main form of collective community work. Tequio, then, becomes an alternative form of organizing from the State. Tequio, most recently, has been used to clean the lagoons and try to stop the ecocide. I argued that Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo populations that live around the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons are constantly criminalized and restricted from using the land and water because of the 1937 declaration establishing the lagoons as a National Park. Furthermore, the conservation discourse of the National Park has a double standard on one side for tourism and the lime oil factory, and on the other against the local people. I demonstrated how tourists consume nature and ideas of tropical paradise while damaging

the environment, and the factory is openly throwing toxic waste into canals that are connected to the lagoons.

The declaration in 1937, states the objective of conservation, but it also clearly maintains a tourist-centered vision. Local people have increasingly abandoned fishing as the primary activity and have shifted towards the tourism industry. This is a direct consequence of the ecocide and environmental degradation of the lagoons. Fishermen and fisherwomen do not fish enough for selling or consumption.

The great paradox of the National Park designation is that it attracts mainly White and Mestizo upper- and middle-class international and national tourists who exploits nature as a commodity. While they enjoy a colonial tropical fantasy, many racialized people still have to take care of them, which, in turn, reproduces racial relations and hierarchies. In this sense, the land of the National Park and the lagoons are entirely maintained for profit, and for the conservation of nature in an imagined "pure" form that dispossesses local people. Inhabitants around the lagoon do not have a property title for their land because they are inside the National Park, so the risk of displacement is always present. The property of the land is completely owned by the Mexican state and, by extension, the mestizo geography, through discourses of conservation and nature that continue to colonize and dispossess a majority of Black and Indigenous populations. The Mexican state creates the colonial fantasy of the National Park and creates a fictional imaginary of "the wilderness" where humans, specifically racialized populations, are seen as destroyers and damagers, while upper and middle -class White and Mestizo tourists are seen as a source of profit. As Brockington et al. argue, "conservation has taken people's land, imposed changes to culture and custom, and marginalized them politically. It is one of the means by which the State exerts control over them" (2008, 2606). The

conservation narrative over the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons has permitted the State control over ancestral Indigenous and Black land. The conservation paradox and the continuous exploitation of a racialized space is part of the grieving geography compound. In the next chapter, I will explore how the ideology of mestizaje creates a whitening project over the land. However, communities around the lagoons are rewriting and reclaiming their existence and their land through practices of radical cartographies.

Chapter 4:

Body-Maps as Alternative Archives from Mestizo Geographies in the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico

Introduction

Image 10. Anonymous Body-Map made in Zapotalito, Oaxaca. January 2018.

A woman with red lips, yellow earrings, a purple shirt and orange pants, and a black heart in the center of her body. On the right side of her, there is a yellow sun, a red heart, and what appear to be feet. On the left side, there is the community government's office, *agencia de policía,* another black heart, and a bag that says "garbage" (basura). Under her is a drawing of a black fish,

dead fish, red and black birds, a crab, a blue Church, and the lagoon. The lagoon is drawn in blue, with fishes and a boat. Also, she drew a mangrove next to the lagoon. Finally, there is another governments office with a Mexican flag. This body map includes two hearts because when I asked in what part of the body they feel happiness and peace, this woman drew the heart and the feet. When I asked in what part of the body they feel sadness, anger, and fear, she drew a black heart; however, she also drew a black heart inside her body, referring to her feelings in the moment of the workshop and toward the activity making the body-map. Image 7 depicts this drawing.

Body-maps describe the intimate and reciprocal relationship between human bodies and other-than-human body--water, land, animals, living beings on earth, in other words, territory. As a methodological praxis of self and communal reflection, body mapping has the power to reveal the direct and indirect, tangible and intangible consequences of multiple socio-historical, gendered and racial processes, like ecocide and environmental racism's impact on the bodies of racialized women in a mestizo geography. Body mapping allows us to perceive the mutual connections between human and non-human bodies. However, the human bodies in the body-maps are concrete and specific, not an abstract universal body but rather individual bodies that intersect the factors of race, gender, class. As Kwan (2011) argues, "while being attentive to how emotions, and spaces are mutually constitutive in particular places and particular times, these new practices should also take into account the existence of different kinds of bodies" (450). As a consequence, if a body is gendered and racialized, so too is the territory where that body inhabits. Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women in Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso are racialized the same way their land is racialized.

After spending the first two months of my fieldwork around the lagoons, I realized the ecocide was affecting the local community not only socially and economically, but also

emotionally. In December of 2018, a collective of Indigenous women came to Zapotalito to do a workshop around access to land and land defenders with women from the community. I talked to Yolanda about doing a workshop about body-maps to understand, in a representative and visual way, how the ecocide is affecting women in the community. Yolanda, who is active in different initiatives around land and Afro-Indigenous struggles, accepted and both collaborated to develop the workshop. Even if I know the tension of my positionality as a mestiza woman in the community, this tension generated other forms of dialogue with Yolanda and with the women who participated in the workshop. The hierarchies exist within this interaction and cannot be undone, but I was trying to navigate it carefully while collaborating with the organizations.

The methodology used in my research stems from an eco-feminist perspective, which I modified to the particularities of the context in the Oaxacan Coast. The workshop centered on the creation of body-maps (*mapas del cuerpo*), based on the manual created by a feminist collective from South America, *Colectivo Miradas Críticas sobre el Territorio* (2017).

Body-maps are archives because they trace the histories of what is happening in the territory and against the women's own bodies. Body-maps, then, are the women's testimonies, through their own auto-representation of what is happening in their surroundings and how an ecocide affects their own communities and families. The maps provide a visual representation that makes clear how the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon is intimately related to the lives of the women that inhabit around it. The Mapuche indigenous Weychafe (warrior) and activist from Argentina Moira Millán coined the concept of terricidio (terricide) in representation of her community, to define "the State and Corporations crime of assassinating the land" (Millán 2020, #). Millán (2020) describes the three dimensions of life according to Indigenous thought. The first dimension is the tangible world where the ecosystem and the environment exist, and refers to the

environment that it is being killed and polluted by extractivism. The second dimension is the perceptive world, or the energetic world, where the essence of life exists, including sacred spaces, temples where people connect with Nature, and the places that are being stolen, polluted, profaned, and destroyed. The third dimension is the culture world, but specifically refers to those cultures that have been oppressed historically[48] (Millán 2020). Similar to terricidio, the consequences of the ecocide of the lagoons, and other structural problems such as drugs and poverty, not only has immediate effects on women's physical bodies from living in an unhealthy environment (e.g., skin diseases, stomach diseases, and diseases like dengue or chinkunguya due to the accumulation of mosquitos in the lagoon), but also it has effects on their emotional and spiritual body. Body-Maps show the raw and materialized effects of the polluted lagoon on the bodies of Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women in a mestizo-state building project. These majorly Black and Indigenous communities experience environmental racism (Bullard 1993). Diana Gómez Correal describes a "holistic body–an organic totality" as "a network of relations where mind and body, the biology and the cultural are not separated, where mind and spirit, emotions are interconnected" (Gómez Correal 2019, 84). The body-map is the testimony of an embodied feel-think archive.

While *mestizo geographies* refer to the Mexican nation State's material and spatial process of slowly erasing and trying to eliminate Black and Indigenous people and territories through dispossession and displacement, as well as through pollution, tourism, and toxicity, our collaborative co-creation of body maps in this space produced counter-hegemonic cartographies against Mexican mestizo geographies. Pollution and toxicity are material tools of colonialism that disappear and slowly eliminate territories and the communities that live on them. Mestizo geographies then, are the tools of Mexican nationalism that imaginarily impose the mestizo trope over the land and space considered to be "the Nation." Body-maps are counter-hegemonic

cartographies that seek to challenge the mestizo geographies produced by the Mexican state. As Raymond Craib (2004) argues, "space tends to be perceived as a static and neutral category" (3), so it denies its agency and its active engagement with the social and political world. Researchers have used body-maps, or body cartographies, as a research methodology in the health research field but also in women and gender studies (Cornwall 1992; Gastaldo, Rivas-Quarneti, and Magalhães 2018). According to Gastaldo et al. (2012), "body-maps originated in South Africa as art-therapy method for women with HIV/AIDS in 2002" (5). Body-maps offer a space to center feelings and emotions in relationship to the land; in other words, it is a way to create dialogue without the necessity of words. Through visual imagery, women from the community can dialogue and connect, understanding their shared experience in their community and territory. Particularly, in the case of the Chacahua-Lagoons, it offers a window to understand how environmental racism not only has sociopolitical and economic effects but also emotional effects on the people from the communities.

Body-maps are part of what Sweet and Ortiz Escalante (2015) call a visceral method as part of a visceral geography because this method "sees the body as the geographical space of inquiry and pays particular attention to how bodies feel internally—sensations, moods, physical, states of being—in relation with surrounding spaces and environments within communities" (1827). In this sense, body-maps reflect the intimate and corporeal dimensions of the relationship human and other-than-human. Gastaldo, Rivas-Quarneti and Magalhães (2018) describe body-maps as a decolonial methodology.

I argue that body-maps also could be understood under the category of what scholars like Bjorn Sletto call "radical social cartographies" because they can be used by Black and Indigenous communities "to document and represent the own conceptions of time, place, and space" (Sletto

2020, 1). Body-maps in this context are auto-representations of individuals in relationship to their land, which itself is already deconstructing other forms of knowledge and theorization, but also is deconstructing the Cartesian notion of separation between body and nature, and body-mind. In relationship to radical social cartographies, body-maps take a step further in the sense of reflecting on the emotional and sensorial relationship between the mapmakers (in this case women) and their territory. In performance studies, Taylor (2003) and Caruso and Haviland (2018) argue that the human body is itself an archive. When women in the community share and discuss their individual body-maps, they are producing an archive of the intimate relationship between their own bodies and the land where they inhabit. This archive also reflects the impacts of the ecocide in their own bodies and emotions as well as the impacts of narco-violence in the region. As Aida Hernández Castillo (2019) argues, there is a deep connection between violence against women´s bodies and the occupation or dispossession of their territories. However, these body-maps also reflect the spaces that, and the people who, comfort these women and make them feel safe and loved—that is, spaces of affective and territorial resistance.

Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women are also producing counter- cartographies to mestizo geographies by reclaiming and re- writing the land, as opposed to the colonial cartography. Through these counter-mappings, women are creating collective memory and embodied experience of their relationship to land and water, but also of the material and concrete effects of the ecocide of the lagoon in their bodies and communities. The Mexican Feminist Geography collective, *Colectivo Geobrujas* argues that a participatory cartography becomes "an approach by the community to the notion of space, which is a direct invitation to place oneself o nthe map and to think about one's own territory from the bodily to the global scale" (2018, 42). The body-maps were an extension of the everyday organizing work that women do in their communities to defend

their land and water, because it generated a collective space to share their feeling and thoughts about the current state of the lagoons and the effects on their families and communities.

As Bjørn Sletto (2009) argues, "participatory map production is intimately implicated in performances of the past, the present, and often divergent , imagined futures" (444). Women from Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso are not only representing their historical roots, but also the present state of the communities and their vision for a better future without the ecocide. Through the body-maps,[49] the women create inter-ethnic and inter-generational dialogue and knowledge. Community map making entails inclusion and reinforcement of the community from the beginning and throughout the process of making the map because it allows "collaboration and sharing amongst participants through its collective nature" (Amsden and VanWynsberghe 2005, 361).Through body-mapping, researchers can understand the materialized effects of the mestizaje project supported by a mestizo geography that erases and targets racialized and gendered bodies and territories: the effects of environmental racism are not abstract but rather tangible and carnal. I believe body-cartographies can be used as alternative archives of environmental racism in the context of mestizo geographies. This community's territory, specifically the lagoons, is slowly dying due to failed governmental and transnational decisions and projects, and the government not taking any further actions or responsibility to solve the problem.

Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women in Cerro Hermoso and Zapotalito produce collectivity as well by sharing with others their feelings and thoughts about their common space and water. Silvia Federici (2010) and Gladys Tzul (2016) call this process of sharing the material reproduction of life as a community practice, which includes all of the domestic labor of women, including caring labor, that does not translate to capital. Women's practices guarantee the life of

their community and their land, such as mutual aid and practices of care between women and the lagoons.

Different maps entail different politics. Body maps are counter-maps because "these projects complicate conventional cartographic dynamics and may reconstitute or subvert power relations" (Parker 2006, 472). By creating body-maps, Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women in Zapotalito and Campamento Cerro Hermoso subvert power and the historical structures of race, ethnicity, class, gender and age in a supposedly mestizo uniformed landscape that has been drawn by the nation-State and reproduced by society every day. As argued by Kitchin and Dogde, maps show how things are in the hegemonic sense (as quoted in Sweet L. and Ortiz Escalante 2017, 599). In opposition to an hegemonic sense, body-maps are decolonial processes that map lands and territories from the gut, the body, and the everyday. They emphasize rather than erase the continuities between the body, the land, and the non-human realm. Body-maps show us how the world, and the land, *feels* and is embodied in experience.[50]

In this chapter first, I propose the term *mestizo geographies* to refer to the Mexican nation State's material process of slowly erasing and trying to eliminate Black, Indigenous, and non-mestizo people and territories through dispossession and displacement, as well as through pollution, tourism, and toxicity. In this context, pollution and toxicity are material tools of colonialism that disappear and slowly eliminate territories and the communities that live on them. Mestizo geographies then, are the tools of Mexican nationalism that imaginarily impose the mestizo trope over the land and space considered to be "the Nation."

I engage with other proposals from Indigenous and Black women in Latin America regarding the relationship of body and land, and specifically the importance of this relationship to understand body-maps as a response and resistance to gendered and racialized violence towards

women's bodies and territories. I then will describe ethnographically the process of the body-maps workshops in the communities in the coast of Oaxaca. I will then explore the idea of these body-maps produced by Black, Indigenous and poor Mestiza women as alternative archives to mestizo geographies.

Colonial Mapping and the Production of Mestizo Geographies

As I argue elsewhere (Rodríguez 2021, in press), the slow death (Berlant 2007; Moreno Parra 2019; Zaragocin 2019a) of the lagoons and the communities surrounding them is part of the territorial violence toward racialized communities in the context of a Mestizo nation. José Vasconcelos defines mestizaje as a mix of races that together create a *cosmic race* (Vasconcelos 1977). However, as scholars like Juliet Hooker (2005b) note, Vasconcelos's theory of the cosmic race is predicated on the eventual erasure of whiteness, Blackness, and indigeneity. In the context under study, body-maps become the counter-mapping of environmental racism in a country where anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity are at the core of the Mexican nation-state project administered through mestizo geographies. Mestizo geographies are a spatial project as well as a socio-racial one. These geographies delimit the territory of the Mexican nation-state, marking territory as mestizo (belonging to all yet subsumed by white-mestizo power[51]) through acts of environmental racism. The creation of an homogenous, cosmic "imagined community[52]" (the Mexican nation-state) depends on the disappearance and elimination of non-mestizo ancestral geographies, particularly Black and Indigenous territories. Mestizo geographies delineate the national territory, marking the boundaries and contours of the mestizo nation-state by erasing Black and Indigenous territories physically and symbolically through violence, pollution, and epistemological erasure. Mestizo geographies also delineate the ownership of the state over the land, creating specific but

totalizing notions of territory. Mestizo geographies are the tool of "mestizo nationalism" (Hooker 2005a) and the "Mestizo State" (Lund 2012).

During the colonial period, one clear example of the use of maps for ruling over the land and people were the *Relaciones Geográficas.* Relaciones Geográficas as a set of cartographies based on questionaries about territory and population conducted between 1577–1585. The questions included subjects around population demographics, languages spoken, political jurisdiction, physical terrain, and native vegetation. The Relaciones were ordered by King Philip II of Spain for a general description of the Spain's "land" in the Indies.[53] The Relaciones Geográficas consist of 43 maps, from which 41 refer to what is now Mexico and two to what is now Guatemala (Benson Library Website). In the case of the Oaxacan Coast, I only found one textual description[54] of the land, food, and culture of one of the towns, "Cozautepec,"[55] created circa 1580. However, in other maps from the Oaxaca state, there is a depiction of the land, the water, and the churches. For example, Image 11 depicts the map of Teguantepec.

Image 11. Stroza Gali, Francisco, "Teguantepec (Oaxaca), 1580," *University of Texas Libraries LLILAS/Benson Latin American Collection Exhibitions*, accessed May 11, 2021, https://utlibrariesbenson.omeka.net/items/show/33.

According to the Benson Library Collection, where this map is located, this *relación* is number 102 and it was made in 1580. The Relación was done by Francisco Stroza Gali. The description was made by the Mayor of the town, Juan de Torres. Relaciones Geográficas, was done by Spanish colonial settlers in collaboration with local people, the majority of them coming from the elite-class. Relaciones Geográficas centers a lot around plants and land, mostly because Spaniards wanted to have a general idea of what they could exploit. According to McDonough (2019), Indigenous people probably were collaborating with Spanish settlers to do this mapping because it was a way of negotiating with the Spaniards to gain knowledge on the interests of the settlers. Furthermore, the participation of Indigenous peoples in Relaciones Geográficas meant "an

unusual repository of written collective land memory that alerts us to what Indigenous authorities had deemed worthy of remembering and coveying to others" (McDonough 2019, 474). In this sense, Relaciones Geográficas is the archive of memory of Indigenous peoples, while at the same time it conveys the spatial and mapping requests from Spaniards.

One of the strategies employed in Mestizo geographies for the building of the Nation-State to expand and colonize the land was the use of cartography. Maps are colonial tools that proliferate nation-state projects (Santos 1978). As Harley argues, mapping "became the business of the state: cartography is early nationalized. … The map becomes a juridical territory: it facilitates surveillance and control" (Harley 2011, 287). In this sense, "maps lie (or at least provide selective stories due to the choices and decisions that have to be made during their creation, and through how they are read by users" (Kitchin and Dodge 2007, 332). Maps have been created for political purposes centered on ownership and certain identities, policing and erasing alternative histories and geographies, and alternative ways of mapping and relating to the territory.

Historically, people have viewed maps as "objective, neutral products of science. Cartography is the means by which the surface of the earth is represented as faithfully as possible" (Kitchin and Dodge 2007, 331). However, scholars have also critiqued this idea, arguing that map making is not objective but rather immersed in power relations. Specifically, mapping is an aspect of juridical power (Harley 2011). As Kitchin and Dodge argue, "in the process of creation, many subjective decisions are made about what to include, how the map will look, and what the map is seeking to communicate" (2007, 332). Maps produce white, mestizo, masculine, and Eurocentric-upper class ways of seeing and understanding the world that become universalized.

In the case of Mexico, the production of maps was a priority to legitimize the existence of the Nation-State. As explored carefully by Craib (2004), after the Mexican-American War of 1848,

the Mexican government created the Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística (SMGE) with the purpose of constructing national maps of the Republic. This map making was necessary to make the idea of "Mexico" real and palpable. Craib argues that the government was invested in the creation of national cartographies to organize the territory, but also these maps could be used in the war as proof against regional, fiscal, and political conflicts. Because the objective was clear, Craib explains, "the 1820s government created a new course of study in geographic engineering, commissioned individuals to travel throughout the entire territory and assemble statistics and a geographic map and composed a national map from the remnants of the Spanish navy´s collection of images created for the defense of New Spain" (23). The efforts to have a national map were undergirded by the desire to prove the existence of the Mexican nation. García Cubas created the most famous map of Mexico, Carta General, in 1857. Image 12 shows this map.

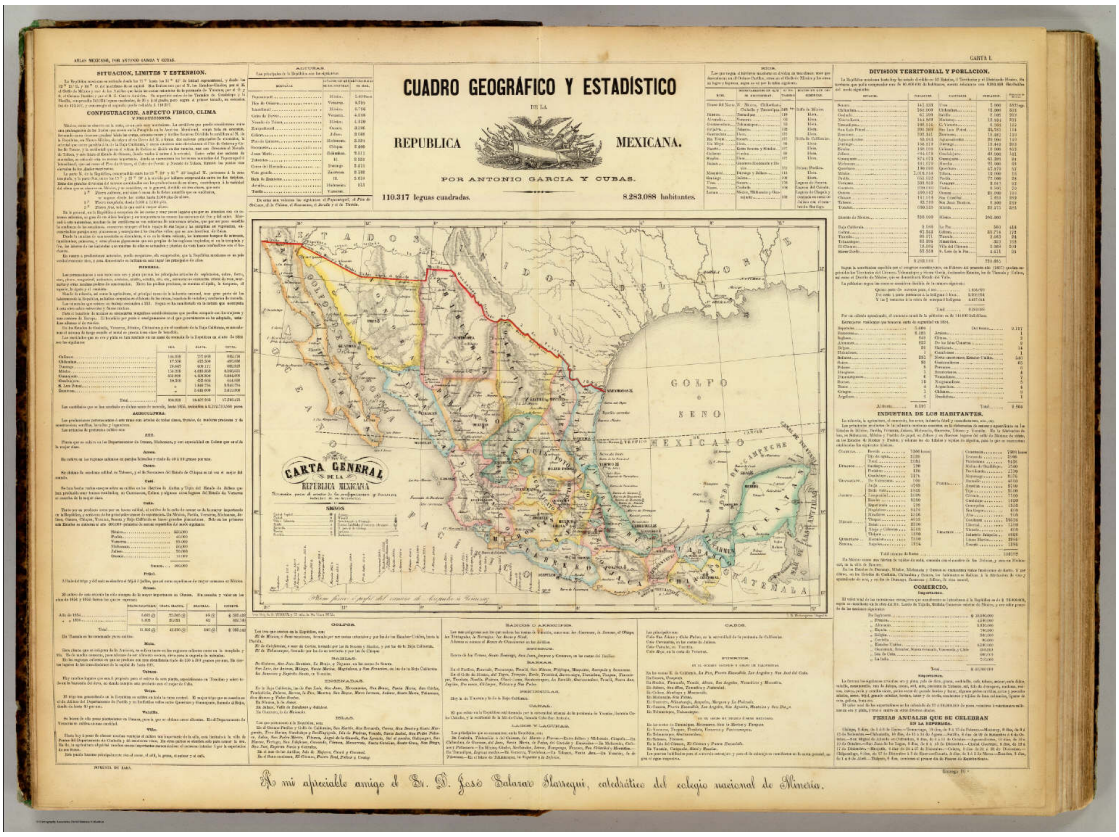

Image 12. Map: Carta General by García Cubas, 1857. Source: David Rumsey Map Collection.

According to Craib (2004), García Cubas "produced the atlas in part to aid the grand projects of an ascendant Liberal regime: colonization, capitalist development, and the disentailment of Chuch and Indian lands" (29). The Carta General, then, was another political project that marked the imposition of ideology and dispossession of land for Indigenous peoples in Mexico. This is an example of how maps and space are not neutral and objective productions, but rather they meet very explicit political agendas. The Mexican state kept creating different maps and government offices specifically for this endeavor for the consolidation of the nation.[56] Maps also helped to avoid land conflict in local states throughout the national territory; however, these maps erased all the vivid life and negotiation of farmers and people for the land.

In the summer of 2018, I visited the State Archive in Oaxaca City with the purpose of looking for maps of the lagoons and the Pacific Coast in Oaxaca, in order to understand more profoundly the historical context of the region. The first thing I noted was that the archives were recently moved from the State offices around downtown of the city to a newly built central building, administered by a private foundation. The foundation was still organizing the archives and maps so I could not access a lot of them. I did, however, find one of the National Park Lagunas de Chacahua (see Image 13).

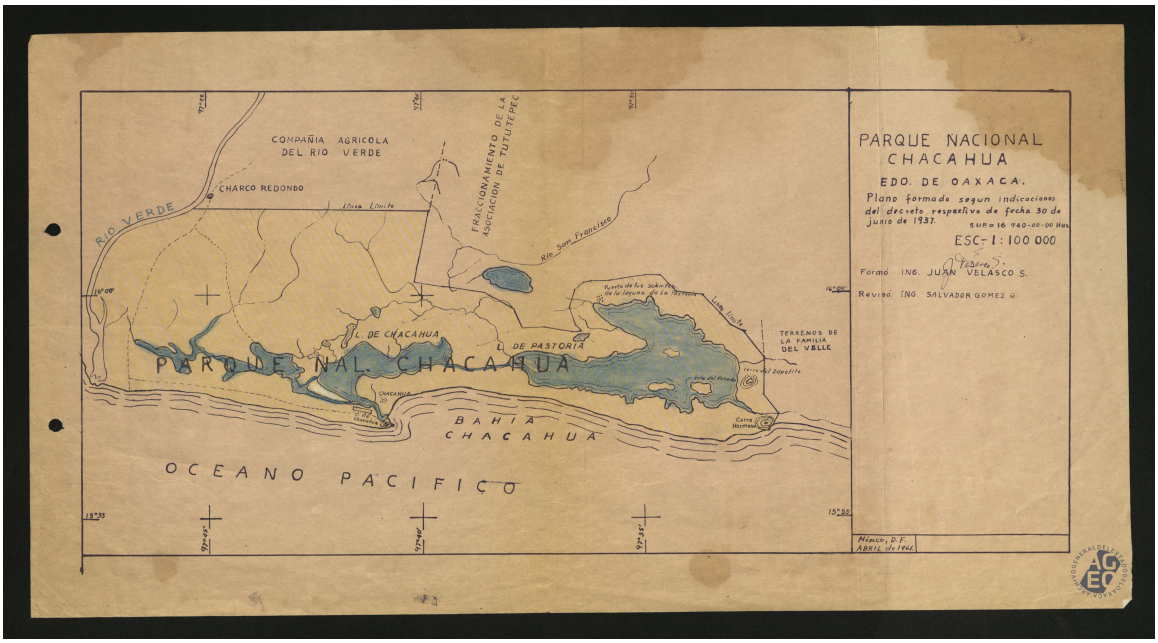

Image 13. Map of the National Park Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons, 1961. The Mexican government created this map in 1961 in Mexico City to delineate the territory defined as the National Park. On the right side it says "Plano formado según indicaciones del decreto respectivo de fecha 30 de junio de 1937." It also annotates the size of the Park: 940-00-00 hectareas. It portrays mainly the different bodies of water in the area, starting with the lagoons, but also the Río Verde and Río San Francisco. It also recognizes some mountains as "cerro hermoso" and "cerro del zapotito," which is exactly where the communities of Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso are now located. It is interesting to note that on the right side it recognizes private property by writing "Terrenos de la familia del Valle." In some parts of the map, it is read "línea límite" (limit line), to exactly determine the end of the National Park. The map has two authors: Engineer Juan Velasco S. and Revised by engineer Salvador Gomez G.

The following map that depicts the community and territory of "Charco Redondo," which is next to the National Park of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons. This map gives a closer idea of the land tenure conflicts in the area (see Map, "Predio Rústico Charco Redondo" 1942).

Image 14. Map, “Predio Rústico Charco Redondo,” 1942. This map was made on October 4th, 1942. In the superior square, it gives the total size of the territory of Charco Redondo, divided into the categories of “National Park: 7982 hectareas, National Commons: 7018 hectareas and Total Superficie: 1500 hectareas.” This map depicts the different bodies of water, Río Verde, Río de San Francisco, Laguna de Salinita, Laguna de Chacahua, Laguna de Pastoría, and different reefs. It also portrays different mountains, such as Cerro de la Cruz, Cerro de la Virgen, and Cerro de Chacahua. It is interesting to compare the irregular lines that represent the bodies of water to the straight lines that represent the division in between the land considered as part of the National Park and the Charco Redondo community land. Under the land described as “National Park,” it is read “Afectado a Charco Redondo: 7928 Hectareas.” This description probably refers to the Charco Redondo’s land that was proclaimed as expropriated to the National Park. On the upper side, the map reads, “Terreno Sobrante de Charco Redondo cedido a Bienes Nacionales,” meaning part of the land that was yielded to National Commons.

In both of these maps, created by the Mexican State, the purpose is to delineate the National Park territory but also the division of land. As I argued before, these maps depict a supposedly "neutral" space, but they also erase other forms of land and therefore rewrite the Black, Indigenous, and poor mestizo populations. Furthermore, these maps erase the vivid and dynamic land conflicts, dispossession, and erasure of non-mestizo geographies. As demonstrated by these maps, mestizo geographies are re-writing and re-appropriating the land as a mestizo national territory. State actors produced these maps with the purpose of legitimizing the ownership of the territory now occupied by a National Park, and as physical proof for the dispossession of ancestral land. The ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons, through pollution and tourism, is a strategy of mestizo geographies for dispossession.

Cuerpo-Territorio: Embodied Theory

Black and Indigenous women are creating resistance by counter-mapping their land, and, as a consequence, are challenging and pushing back against mestizo geographies. Counter-mapping, then, becomes a tool of resistance, to re-appropriate and re-write their land, on their own terms, and through their own history. Counter-mapping also implies to re-generate the relationship to the land, not through a extractivist notion, but rather, through an affective and intimate bond. In this sense, counter-mapping becomes a process of healing.

Cuerpo-Territorio (Body-Territory) is a concept born in Latin America from Indigenous women's epistemologies while defending their territory. It is a concept that describes the intimacy and mutual correlation between the human body, especially women's bodis, and the territory where they live. Cuerpo-Territorio is an inter-relational experience between human and other-than-

human; in this particular case, the lagoons. Lorena Cabnal (2010), a communitary Xinca feminist from Guatemala, argues:

> In the approach of recovery and historical defense of my body land territory, I assume recovery of my expropriated body to generate life, joy, vitality, pleasures and construction of liberating knowledge for decision making and this power together with the defense of my body land territory because I cannot conceive this woman's body without a space in the land that dignifies my existence, and promote my life fully. (23)

In this sense, the body is a territory to defend because it is in the body where women feel pain, sadness, grief, as well as joy and pleasure. The body becomes the primary site of contestation because it is in this first scale of materiality, that through different emotions, women produce healing. This body cannot be understood without the space it inhabits: the territory-land. The body maps women produced during our workshops demonstrate how Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women from Zapotalito and Cerro understand, or *sentipiensan,* "feel-think" (Fals Borda 2009) and embody the imbricated connection between land and the body. The interrelated connection of the body with the territory, or of the human and other-than-human interaction, is narrated and represented in the maps through images and drawings. Colectivo Geobrujas argues " by becoming aware of our physical body, our senses, our emotions and our thoughts, we are creating a process of self-knowledge that we can share and contrast as a community or group" (2018, 42).

Body-maps can be used as an alternative method of archiving because they allow creators to questions the universal construction of "truth" that is usually established by white men from the Global North. This universal and unique truth has its roots in the Enlightenment Era that place the reason at center (Quijano 2000). Within this perspective, Cartesian thought divides reality in binaries, such as human/nature or body/mind (Escobar 1999). The colonial project supports the idea of human relating to nature and land in terms of property and domination (Burkhart 2016a).

The separated notion of the human from the other-than human or of the body from the territory is part of a Western construction that divided human and nature, and that placed Reason at the center of the human existence, as indicated by the philosophers Descartes (2010) and Kant (2003). The West understood nature only as a means of exploitation by humans, or in terms of nature versus culture (human).[57] However, from a non-Eurocentric perspective, particularly from Indigenous and Black populations in *Abya Yala*,[58] this division does not exist. Rather, these groups emphasize the intimate co-existence between humans and nature, understanding humans as having a kinship to the land (Burkhart 2016b). The connection between the body and territory is not only spatial, but also emotional, spiritual (Sweet L. and Ortiz Escalante 2017a), and even erotic (Tallbear 2017).

In case of my study, the human body in connection with other-than-human body of water, a lagoon, demonstrates a spiritual connection, which is not opposite to a political connection. The spiritual world is also political because, as Keisha-Khan Perry (2013) argues, "spirituality must acquire a privileged space in the broader understanding of how black women have responded to the barbarous reality of class-based and gendered racism" (157). When women in Zapotalito and Campamento Cerro Hermoso connect to the land, it is also a spiritual connection to their ancestry and the people who have historically inhabited the land and the lagoon. Perry explains, "black women have been uniquely positioned in these communities as having both collective memory and legal documentation of ancestral lands" (156). It is also not a coincidence that in many of the body-maps produced in the workshop, women drew a church or the image of "god" as important places in their community or for themselves. Even though institutionalized Western religion is being practiced in the communities, it is interrelated and materialized into their singular human experience as holistic and spiritual beings.

The intimate relationship of body and territory occurs because, as Cabnal (2017) explains, "we are and we feel the injustices and indignations that other bodies and nature live because of patriarchy; we get together and act with full awareness to collectively defend our body" (102). Therefore, I argue that Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women are resisting ecocide on the Coast of Oaxaca and resisting the necropolitics[59] of the state by collectively organizing and by creating collective memory through mapping.

Mapping the Body, The Land, and The Ecocide

Cristina, a Black fisherwoman from Zapotalito, Oaxaca, started drawing her body-map on a piece of white paper with a purple-colored pencil. The color of her skin, her hair, and her lips are brown. In the drawing, she is wearing a green skirt and a yellow shirt. She drew her three kids as people who are important to her. She also drew the mangroves, or the trees that live inside the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons and that are responsible for bringing oxygen to the lagoon. She drew the mountains and some animals, such as ducks and geese. She is standing over the water, which she drew with a lot of fish. Right by her foot, and over the water, she drew what is represented as trash and in one of those representations she wrote the word "coca-cola." On the other side, she drew one bottle that says "corona," referring to the beer, as well as another figure that says "drugs," which represent the consumption and drug problems in the community and things that make her feel unsafe. She drew in her chest a red heart, where she feels all of the feelings around her community and herself.

I facilitated two workshops of *mapas del cuerpo* (body-maps) in two communities in collaboration with local organizations: El Zapotalito and Campamento Cerro Hermoso in the Coast of Oaxaca in December of 2017 and January 2018. Campamento Cerro Hermoso is one of the

communities[60] next to the ocean, where the lagoon was disconnected. These two communities had different people attending the workshop. I will describe in general the workshop and some differences between the workshops, mainly in reference to the ages of the women who attended.

I collaborated with Yolanda, an Afro-Mixtec woman and founder of *Colectiva de la Costa Ña´a Tundaa,* and collaborated with *Colectivo Mujeres Pescadoras del Manglar,* a collective of fisherwomen in Zapotalito who offered the space of their restaurant for the workshop. As part of the *Colectiva Ña´a Tundaa*, Karla and Jossi, two Afromexican young women sisters, helped as well in the workshop. Rosa, an Afromexican woman and member of the collective *Itacuá* who lives in Campamento Cerro Hermoso, collaborated with me and Yolanda to help organize the workshop in her community. *Itacuá* is a group of women who make different products out of the hibiscus flowers they grow in Campamento Cerro Hermoso. Rosa announced the workshop in the community, but also invited some women personally, and she arranged the place for the workshop: the main plaza of the community. Rosa and other women brought chairs so we all could sit.

In Zapotalito, the workshop happened in the *Mujeres del Manglar's* restaurant in the afternoon and approximately 13 women attended and one young boy from the community's middle school who was interested in the activity. For this workshop, almost all the women from the *Colectivo Mujeres Pescadoras del Manglar* attended, as well as other women from the community; the women's ages were between 14–65 years old. We conducted the workshop in the main plaza of the community, in an open space with a palm tree ceiling, which is a traditional form of building houses in the coast to avoid the heat. To our surprise, this workshop was different from Zapotalito, as many women were elders and aged between 70–80 years old. This workshop included 10–12 women total. I will describe what happened in the workshops in the two communities.

The workshop was important to understand how women's bodies are territories themselves, and to understand the connection between the body, emotions, and territory in their particular context: environmental racism and structural violence. Katherine McKittrick (2006b) argues, racism and sexism are not only bodily based, but also they are spatial acts. As various scholars (Hernández Castillo 2019; McKittrick 2006a; Segato 2010) have confirmed, violence against women's bodies is used to control their territory and their communities.

When we first arrived to the places where the workshops happened, Yolanda gave the welcoming words and explained to the women who attended the dynamic and the importance of reflecting collectively about the land and environment, especially in a place where the lagoons are at risk of dying. Yolanda also named her Colectiva de la Costa Ña'a Tundaa as the organizer of the activity and explained all the activities and missions that her group does in supporting women in the communities, such as this workshop. Yolanda introduced me and explained I was going to facilitate a workshop where women would draw and represent themselves and their environment and community. The women grabbed a chair and seated. Yolanda and I had bought some paper and markers, and we asked the women what some of the main places and things in the community were. Jossi helped me to grab the paper over the wall while I was writing the answers, so all women could see the text. The women's answers included: houses, ocean, trees, lagoons, fish, animals. For each word, we all together thought and shared different kinds of trees in the region. For example, they named the trees of hibiscus, palm, mango, guayacán, nanche, plum, and guava. The women also named different kinds of the fish in the lagoons and the ocean: coatete, robalo, pargo, and cabezuda, and some other animals that inhabit the region: turtles and crocodiles, armadillos, peageons, and seagulls. In all of these interactions, Yolanda, as someone who is part of the community and knows the environment, would give examples so the other women could relate to

other answers. We asked also of activities and work that women perform in the community. It was important for us (Yolanda and I) to generate a space to center women's role in the community. Women answered cooking, cleaning, fishing, taking care of the kids, and doing laundry. The objective was also to visibilize all of the feminine work that is generally undervalued but that helps to keep the community going. After asking these questions, Yolanda, Jossi, and I gave out blank pieces of paper to each woman, and we put colored pencils in the middle of the table. Karla, the other sister who was helping the organization of the workshop, decided she wanted to document the process, so she took the photo camera and took pictures of all the workshops. In each step of the process, Yolanda and I would walk around to the different tables where women were seated and talk to them about the drawings and representations. The women were reflecting and thinking through every step which color to use, what figure to include, and what space to draw.

The first step of the workshop was to have them draw themselves. Progressively, with the pencil colors, their own image became real on the paper. They would share their illustration between each other and laugh, or just comment how good of an artist they were. The majority of the women grabbed the brown and dark brown colors to draw their skin. Something they put special attention on was their hair. They said it had to be either curly or straight, black and brown. They also decided what clothes to wear in the drawing using different colors. Once they finish drawing themselves, we asked them to draw their community, their environment, and things that they thought were important for them from the land they inhabit. All of them drew the lagoon, the ocean, the trees, some endemic plants from the region, and animals. The next thing we asked them to draw was the problems they considered important in their community and to which their bodies felt emotions associated with these problems.

In general, all of the drawings showed the polluted lagoon. Some represented this pollution by grabbing the black color and drawing on top of the blue lagoon; others drew fishes in black to represent dead fish; some drew lines on top of the lagoon to represent the bad smell; others drew trash over the lagoon or near to it; and some of them drew drugs and bottles of alcohol to refer to the drug use and alcoholism in the communities. Most of the women drew their heart as the place where they feel sadness, anger, or other negative emotions. Some represented these emotions by drawing a black heart on their bodies, and others drew the heart as bleeding in red.

After that activity, we asked them to draw the places or things that made them felt safe and good in the community and to indicate which part of the body they felt these emotions. Some of them draw their home, especially their family and children, while others draw the Church or even Jesus. All of the women located the positive emotions, such as happiness or love, by drawing a red heart in their bodies. It is important to highlight that emotions are not abstract. Through the body map, these women were able to materialize how the environment is connected to the body and where their corporeal emotion is located within their bodies. By identifying in what part of the body they feel sadness, anger, because of the community´s problems, such as the pollution in the lagoons, women were representing how the body of water is connected to their own human body.

After all the women finished their body maps, we asked them to put together all of the maps on the floor and to look at them. We made a circle surrounding the drawings and we asked them to notice the differences and similarities between them. They observed the similarities in their bodies, the color of the skin, and the hair, as well as the lagoon and water in all the drawings. Women also commented on how all of them identify the dying lagoon and pollution as a main problem in the community. In other words, the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons was centered as the center of many of the issues in Zapotalito and Campamento Cerro Hermoso. Drugs

in the community was another problem that some identify in their communities and that was shared. On the other gand, they also observed how some women drew the church, others their home, and others the main plaza as safe or important spaces in their communities. In the end, it was an exercise to see how women who share the same territory also share similar emotions about the land, including the current the problems, but also the positive emotions they have. Some of the women started laughing, and other women made comments such as “At least I don’t feel alone in this.” This comment was true, as they were together not only physically, but also regarding their problems and associated feelings they faced. The workshop then, became a space to collaborate and create dialogue in between women from the community, a space to talk about the main issues in their land and how they feel about it. It also created a space of healing, of talking, laughing and having fun,a space of joy.

One big difference between these two communities is the elder women who attended the Campamento Cerro Hermoso workshop. This experience was different because for the elder women. The elder women in the group told me it was their first time drawing, especially drawing pictures of themselves.As they told me, they had never attended school, so it was the first time in their lives that they grabbed a colored pencil. The three of them were seated together at the same table and were laughing while telling this story. They were teaching each other how to grab the pencil, and how to trace the lines, they were laughing at their first lines, but little by little they started representing themselves and their land. They were choosing colors and inter-changing comments within each other, sometimes with jokes, about the figures, or colors chosen.

I argue these body-maps are archives of community knowledge created by women. These alternative body-mapping creations are an archive of collective history, but also of feelings and emotions around their community and territory. Through this community archive, women

document how the ecocide and other issues such as drugs is affecting their bodies, and their families. The drawings are also maps of the geography and the community as well as of the women's own bodily representations within those space. In addition, the drawings evidence the intimate interrelation between the land, the water, and the women. Women who attended the workshop reflected on how, through this mapping, they observed how emotions are located in the body, particularly, emotions that are caused by the space they inhabit. Furthermore, through these body-maps women narrated how important it was for them to know that the feelings they experience, are not unique to themselves, but there are other women in the same community that share their feelings. This collective reflection made them feel less isolated and alone in facing the ecocide of the lagoons.

Rosa, from Campamento Cerro Hermoso, drew herself using the red colored pencil and within her body-map, she wrote phrases. She drew herself with curly hair and wearing a dress. She drew two plants on the paper: *guayacán*, next to her home and in purple; and a hibiscus plant, which her collective "Grupo Ita Cuaa" cultivates to make products such as jelly. She also drew a little home and she wrote, *"taller para preparar sus derivados de la Jamaica,"* which translates to "workshop to prepare hibiscus products," where Rosa and the other women actually make all the products to sell. She also drew the "Agencia," which is the government office for the community Campamento Cerro Hermoso. She drew the Christian temple as another important place for her in the community. The lagoon is represented next to her, with blue water and fishes, and it reads *"laguna contaminada"* or "polluted lagoon." By her feet she wrote *"mucha drogadiccion en los adolescentes me da dolor,"* which translates to "much drug addiction in the teenagers gives me pain." She also writes in regard to the territory, "*nuestro territorio no tenemos documentos,*" or "our territory which we don't have documents." This phrase refers to the situation

in which the community members do not have legal ownership documents of the land, because Campamento Cerro Hermoso was a community that the local government offered the people. They came and occupied it, but they still do not have documents. Finally, inside her body, Rosa wrote *"yo siento alegria en mi corazon"* which means, "I feel happiness in my heart." Image 15 depicts Rosa's body map.

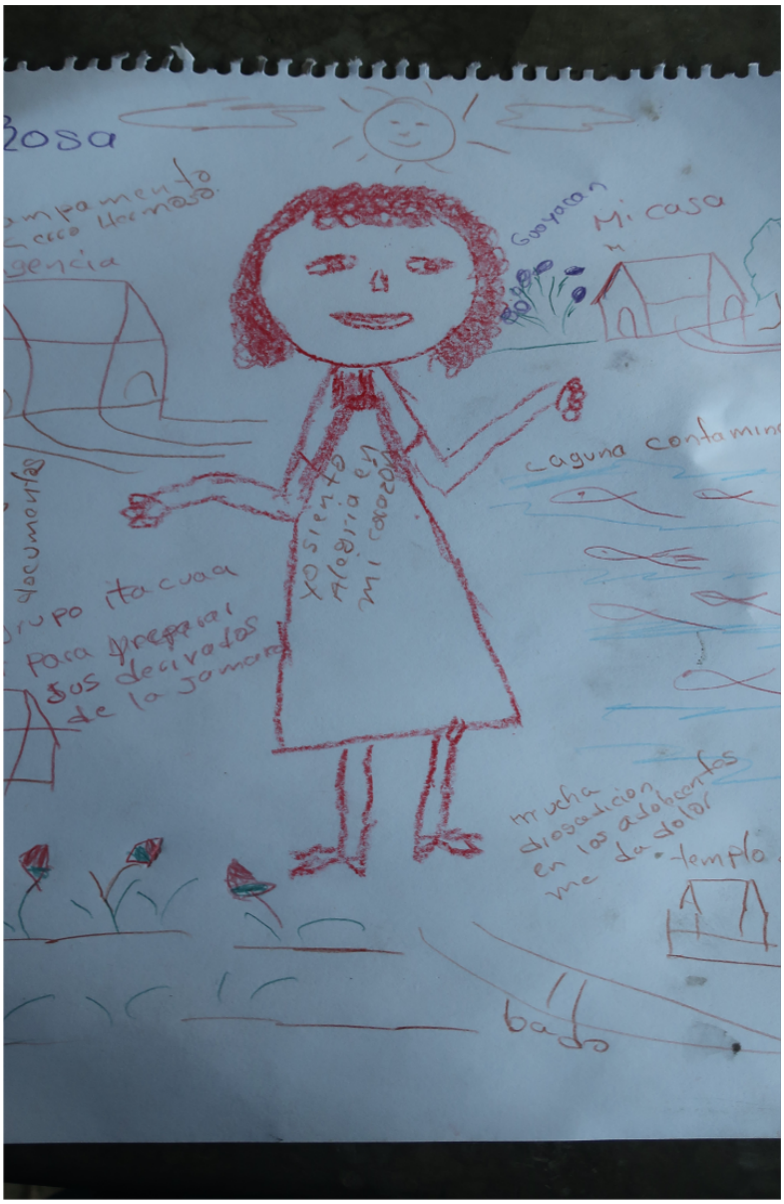

Image 15. Rosa's Body-Map made in Cerro Hermoso, Oaxaca. January 2018.

Petra, from Zapotalito, drew herself in black pencil with curly short hair, and her arms were drawn in brown to represent her skin color. She drew herself with red lips and with earrings. In the drawing, she wears some pants and what looks like a bra. I remember she said they were supposed to be coconuts, and she laughed. She drew a big sun on top of the drawing, a tree, and the lagoon in purple with a palm tree with coconuts. Inside the lagoon, she drew a boat to represent the boat the fishermen use to go into the ocean or lagoon and look for fish to eat or sell. She drew the Church and her home. She also drew two hearts, a red one on top of her head, and a bigger one next to her face with an arrow through that is bleeding. I remember she did that to make the difference between the moments where she feels happy or safe (the complete heart on top of her head), as opposed to the moments when she feels sad, angry or unsafe (the bleed heart). Image 16 depicts Petra's drawing.

Image 16. Petra's Body-Map made in Zapotalito, Oaxaca. January 2018.

Body-maps are archives because they trace the histories of what is happening in the territory and against the women's own bodies. Body-Maps show the raw and materialized effects of the polluted lagoon on the bodies of Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women in a mestizo-state building project. These majorly Black and Indigenous communities experience environmental racism (Bullard 1993).

Body-maps, then, are the women's testimonies, through their own auto-representation of what is happening in their surroundings and how an ecocide affects their own communities and families. The maps provide a visual representation that makes clear how the ecocide of the

Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon is intimately related to the lives of the women that inhabit around it. The Mapuche indigenous *Weychafe* (warrior) and activist from Argentina Moira Millán coined the concept of *terricidio* (terricide) in representation of her community, to define "the State and Corporations crime of *assassinating* the land" (Millán 2020, #). Millán (2020) describes the three dimensions of life according to Indigenous thought. The first dimension is the tangible world where the ecosystem and the environment exist, and refers to the environment that it is being killed and polluted by extractivism. The second dimension is the perceptive world, or the energetic world, where the essence of life exists, including sacred spaces, temples where people connect with Nature, and the places that are being stolen, polluted, profaned, and destroyed. The third dimension is the culture world, but specifically refers to those cultures that have been oppressed historically[61] (Millán 2020). Similar to *terricidio*, the consequences of the ecocide of the lagoons, and other structural problems such as drugs and poverty, not only has immediate effects on women's physical bodies from living in an unhealthy environment (e.g., skin diseases, stomach diseases, and diseases like dengue or chinkunguya due to the accumulation of mosquitos in the lagoon), but also it has effects on their emotional and spiritual body. Diana Gómez Correal describes a "holistic body–an organic totality" as "a network of relations where mind and body, the biology and the cultural are not separated, where mind and spirit, emotions are interconnected" (Gómez Correal 2019, 84). The body-map is the testimony of an embodied feel-think archive. Image 17 depicts a body-map made by a woman in Zapotalito. She drew her children next to her, as a place where she feels safe. In the body-map you can also see trash by her feet, referring to pollution in the environment. The lagoons are depicted with fish, mangroves, and birds.

Image 17. Cristina Body-Map made in Zapotalito, Oaxaca. January 2018.

A body-map is an archive of memory, of sensations and feelings, and of the relationship between the territory and the body. If the body can be its own archive, then it "requires a radical openness to the possibility that knowledge can be both legible and embodied, that is not only accessed through texts, but also generated and understood through physical states and actions" (Caruso Haviland 2018, 278). The human body, especially the body of a racialized women, affected by an ecocide creates a production of knowledge and memory through the body. Because of this, the body becomes an archive of trauma, of racism, of sexism, and of classism. However, a more-than human body—such as a body of water materialized in a lagoon that is dying or the dead

fishes and the dying mangroves—also is an archive of memory and of the violence exerted toward it. When we think of the cuerpo-territorio as mutually constitutive of each other, then we can think of the cuerpo-territorio as an archive of mutual emotions, sensations, and feelings. This cuerpo-territorio knowledge of pain and trauma is registered through the body-cartographies and it does not need a verbal process, only a rational one. Diana Taylor (2003) argues, "the writing = memory/knowledge equation is central to Western epistemology" and the author adds, "that model continues to bring about the disappearance of embodied knowledge that is so frequent announces" (24). On the other side, the body-cartography is witness to an embodied knowledge and memory of the human and the other-than human.

Mestizo Geography and Alternative Archives

Body-maps have been used as a research methodology in the health research field and in the field of women and gender studies (Cornwall 1992; Gastaldo, Rivas-Quarneti, and Magalhães 2018). According to Gastaldo et al. (2012), "body-maps originated in South Africa as art-therapy method for women with HIV/AIDS in 2002" (5). Body maps are part of what Sweet and Ortiz Escalante call a visceral method as part of a visceral geography because this method "sees the body as the geographical space of inquiry and pays particular attention to how bodies feel internally – sensations, moods, physical, states of being –in relation with surrounding spaces and environments within communities" (Sweet L. and Ortiz Escalante 2015, 1827). In other parts of Latin America, body-maps have been used by feminist geography collectives to map the relationship between women's bodies and their land in rural and urban contexts. The groups *Colectivo Miradas Críticas al Territorio*[62] (Ecuador), Iconoclasistas[63] (Argentina) and *Geobrujas*[64] (Mexico) are pioneers in the region for using this methodology as a decolonial tool for understanding the emotional and

material bond between humans and other-than-human beings. These specific collectives inspired my work to counter-map in collaboration with the collectives in the Coast, because, as Geobrujas argues "it implies collective and community knowledge as the main subject and it is proposed to open this tool to all people who wish to represent their reality" (2018, 41). It was important for women around the lagoons to map their own land, from their own perspective.

From a decolonial perspective, coloniality of power (Quijano 2000) was inaugurated in 1492 in Latin America based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender, when non-Europeans became racialized and gendered (Curiel, Ochy 2013; Espinosa Miñoso 2014; Lugones 2010). Sylvia Wynter (1995) argues that 1492 marked the construction of a New World that centered on the category of "Man," with Europeans and Amerindians (despite its significant power access) on the side of the human and those of African descent on the side of non-human. That is, a colonial system of oppression that operates specifically from anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity (McKittrick 2006b; Wolfe 2006). This colonial project also centers Eurocentric white existence and knowledge and erases other epistemologies and bodies. However, this colonial project is still operating through other narratives, such as mestizaje—a whitening ideology—in Latin America and specifically in Mexico. The colonial project of mestizaje as the nation-state building project erases all of the other subjectivities by assimilation, in the case of the indigenous population, or by erasure, in the case of Afrodescendant population, as well as by the State describing the nation only as mestizo. The result is a Mexican country based on a mestizo geography. The colonial project of nation-state building occurred with the help of maps, which graphically marked the Mexican territory as this imagined territory and identity, named mestizo. With these maps, Mexican nation-state was not only marking the territorial legal boundaries of a country, but also the territory where mestizaje was going to be imposed as a national homogenizing identity. As a

result, with the help of maps created by the State, a mestizo geography became imagined and imposed. This geography forced Black and Indigenous communities and territories to be either integrated into mestizaje (Indigenous populations) or to be erased (Black populations). Either way, the mestizaje project is a whitening project (Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. 2010b) where non-mestizos are denied their existence (Hooker 2005a).

Even despite the neoliberal multiculturalism turn in the 1990s when indigenous people were recognized, and the more recent 2019 appearance of Afrodescendant people in the national constitution, mestizaje creates racial and ethnic hierarchies not only in terms of identity but also in terms of territory where mestizo identity is hierarchically on top (Hale 2005). Which territories and people will have more access to basic conditions of human and non-human life? Still, mestizaje, through mestizo geography, continues to claim Indigenous and Black communities' land, using legal tools to dispossess, erase, or pollute lands in the name of them "Mexican national territory." In addition, mestizaje entails the configuration of nationalism through borders and territory. In this sense, the mestizo geography is how the mestizaje ideology operates in a material and spatial form.

Body-maps can be used as a testimony of other non-mestizo, Black, and Indigenous geographies and territories that have existed beyond the nation-state project building of Mexico. In particular, I argue that the body-maps specifically created in the coast of Oaxaca are anticolonial maps because they represent the intersections of race, class, ethnicity, and age that exists in the communities. In this sense, the body-maps de-universalize the "women's body" as a homogenous category. The Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestiza women who produced their body-maps in Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso were also producing counter-maps about their land, their water, their community, and their own representation and experience of inter-ethnic and inter-

generational dialogue. Through their body-maps, they also produced a collective memory about the embodied effects of the dying Chacahua-Pastoría lagoon in their territory. The body-maps are archives because they create alternative sources of knowledge with the narratives including the non-verbal language of Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women.

Body-maps are a tool of archiving the collective feelings and perceptions of the women, because "body mapping enables people to provide their versions of processes and structures, and to reflect on and articulate their concerns" (Cornwall 1992, 7). Body-maps are counter-maps because they erase the Cartesian division of human and nature, body and mind. The maps think of the body as a more complex and fluid entity in relationship with the environment. The maps also position affect and feelings as an important way of understanding the world. Body-maps, then, can be used as an alternative archive that keeps the collective memory of material effects of environmental degradation in Black, Indigenous, and poor Mestizo bodies within a mestizo geography. The maps also show how the ecocide as direct effects on humans and other-than human bodies. Body-maps question the traditional cartography and geography that present only one truth, thus becoming a process of decolonizing "geographical knowledges" (Radcliffe 2017; Sundberg 2014). The first, most intimate scale of the map is the body. These maps are alternative archives because they do not require diplomas or formal institutional knowledge to create them; rather, they recreate the embodied theory and knowledges that Black, Indigenous and poor mestiza women have in their own bodies

It is important to highlight that each woman's body is different and is marked through social categories of race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, disability, and other categories, this is an auto-exploration of their own perception of themselves. Likewise, the maps present auto-representation of Black, Indigenous and racialized women who make visible other identities and

existence, and who contest the mestizo geography. The body of water, in this case the lagoon, is the object of violence, similar to the ways the bodies of women in the community are subjects of gendered racialized oppression and violence in their community by the narcotraffickers and by the state. As McKittrick (2006) argues, "geographically, in the most crude sense, the body is territorialized –it is publicly and financially claimed, owned, and controlled by an outsider" (44).

These body-maps are counter-hegemonic cartographies of a specific mestizo geography and time. In this sense, they are a non-verbal archive of emotions, affects, and effects of environmental racism in women's bodies, and represent the women's intimate relationship with land and water. Therefore, they are not static archives but rather they reflect a specific moment in time and space.

The body-territory mapping workshop was an opportunity to talk and express pain, sadness, as well as gratitude toward the territory and the bodies of women of this land. The women would draw themselves in the center of the paper, and then they could draw important places for them, problems in the community, and what emotions were related to those problems, and then offer potential solutions. As Diana Gómez Correal argues, "people are not only constructed in relationship to others, but also to a specific territory. The network of life its built in between individuals and also them in relationship to a concrete space" (Gómez Correal 2019, 88). Through these maps, the body is no longer an abstract and universal ontological being, but rather is a particular material body with a history, voice, feelings, and thoughts that are marked by intersections of race, gender, class, and age, among other social categories. I believe body-mapping is a feminist methodology that centers emotions and makes visible the power relations and structures in a country where anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity are at the center of the project of mestizaje, of mestizo geographies. Bondi et al. argue (2005; as cited in Kwan 2011), "our

geospatial practices should be infused with a sense of 'emotional involvement with people and places" (2). Body-maps can display how an ecocide of a lagoon directly affects concrete human bodies through their "feelings related to bodily experiences and sensations, which is central to the experience of violence" (Sweet L. and Ortiz Escalante 2017, 597).

Interviews and oral histories are important to understand the narrative and historical perspectives of Black, Indigenous, poor mestiza women in Zapotalito about the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoon. Through body-maps, we can analyze the "non-verbal communication languages of the body" (Sweet L. and Ortiz Escalante 2017, 597). Maps can reflect the "emotional and other abstract connections experienced by the mapmaker" (Amsden and VanWynsberghe 2005, 361). Body-maps prove that the body and the territory are inseparable and in constant co-relation, especially with the mapmaker as was the case for these women. Through the process of creating body-maps, it was created a space for collective healing, through talking and reflecting on the effects of the ecocide in their bodies and community. The process of the map-making became by itself a place for sharing local knowledge on their land, and to nourish the community relations. Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women became intimate mapmakers who know, feel, and are affected by the territory and water they inhabit. Through this activity they were able to translate this knowledge into a map, a body-map, where the body becomes an extension of their territory and water. The human body thus becomes an extension of the more-than human.

Conclusion

The methodology of body-maps can produce a collective memory-archive of the ecocide of the lagoon, including environmental racism that affects the women's body-territory not only in physical ways, but also in spiritual and emotional ways. Even in the process itself of producing the body-maps, there is another relationship with the body. Traditional maps separate the human body

from territory, as if the land exists in isolation. Usually, there are no traces of human or animal bodies or populations on maps, or sometimes they are only represented as dots, which produces a disembodied cartography related to the notion of objective knowledge and science (Kwan 2011). In this disembodiment process, "the knower is capable of achieving a detached view into separate, completely knowable world" (Kwan 2011, 449). This creates an imaginary of the cartographer or mapmaker, but also of the map itself as detached, objective, and where the subjective creation of the map is erased.

On the other hand, body-maps are counter-maps that create knowledge from the community to demonstrate their relationship to the land, and to build a collective memory-archive of the ecocide of the lagoon, and how environmental racism affects directly and materially their body-territory not only in physical ways, but also in spiritual and emotional ways. The body-maps in this study reflected the intimate and interrelated interaction between the bodies of Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women with the land and especially with a body of water: a lagoon in Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso. The maps also gave a space for women to talk collectively about what is happening in the lagoon and in their communities. The *cuerpo-territorio* concept created by Indigenous and Black women in Abya Yala, particularly from *feminismo comunitario* in Guatemala, is a reflection of these blurred boundaries of affective, spiritual, and physical connections between the human and the more-than human. Archives have been historically created by the state and colonial institutions that even today remain guarded in closed physical spaces and are not easily accessible by the general public.

It is because bodies and territory have an intertwined relationship that the patriarchal settler capitalist State (Wolfe 2006; Speed 2019) project—embodied mainly in white and mestizo middle- and upper-class men—dispossesses and exerts violence specifically towards Black, Indigenous,

and poor mestiza women in Mexico. The State continues this project in order to exert violence against the territory and the other-than-human, and in order to exert violence towards the people who live in the communities. The mestizaje project destroys and extracts their territory and the other-than-human. In this sense, coloniality not only operates with subjects, but also with the land (Burkhart 2016b). The extractivist and environmental racism that communities like Zapotalito and Campamento Cerro Hermoso experience, then, is just a continuation of the first colonizers. As the Venezuelan ecofeminist collective *LaDanta LasCanta* argues "extractivism started after 1492" (LasCanta 2017, 40), as a colonial project that has been maintained through mestizo geography, a tool of the mestizaje ideology.

These body-maps, "draw on tactical media or interventionist practice that creates disruptions within existing systems of power to produce Anti-surveillance maps" (Crampton 2009, 843). Since these body-maps archive the collective memory of communities during a specific period of time (2017–2018), body-maps could be done again in the future to keep archiving the different notions and relationships between human and more-than human bodies through time and space. As the Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador (2017) states, "the instruments of a critical geography have to accompany the territorial resistances to put in evidence on how the inherent contradictions of capital are present" (176). The body-maps created in Zapotalito and Cerro Hermoso by Black, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women provide a new narrative in first-person about what is happening in their territory, including the material, emotional, and spiritual consequences of the ecocide in the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons. These body-maps also highlight the territories inhabited and produced by Black and Indigenous peoples in a country that imposes homogeneity through an imagined, everyday emphasis on mestizo geographies. In the next

chapter, I will describe how mestizo geographies are part of a larger whitening but also necropolitical project which I call necro-mestizaje.

Chapter 5:

Necro-mestizaje, Gender, and Political Resistance

Necro-Mestizaje and Violence in Zapotalito

It was around October 15 of 2017. I was in El Zapotalito, visiting Yolanda's house and getting ready to go to sleep. Patricia and her two daughters came into the house to talk about their plans to make hand-woven, traditional clothes from the region to sell to friends and tourists. Because of the hot weather, we moved outside to sit and talk sat under the mango tree in Yolanda's yard, just like every other night. We talked about family, the lagoon, food, and plans for the future. Yolanda offered us bread and a hot coffee. Around 11 pm we said goodnight and went to sleep.

The next morning, around 6 am, I woke up when I heard a noise outside. I saw that Yolanda and Juan were already up. I went outside and said "good morning" to Yolanda. Yolanda replied, "unfortunately is not a good morning." I saw that Yolanda's eyes were watering. I asked her what had happened, and she said, "Patricia's husband, Jose, was killed 20 minutes ago." I felt nauseous and, as we say in Mexico, I felt *un nudo en la panza,* or "a knot in the belly." We did not know exactly what had happened and no one knew who it did; people were scared to investigate any further. He was a farmer and, as all we knew was that he had gone to the papaya fields to work as he had every day but today he did not come back. Early that morning, Jose drove his truck to his farm just near entrance of the community. Apparently, the murderers were waiting for him there and shot him dead.

I was horrified, in shock, and I did not know what to do. Just a few hours before, we were with Patricia and her daughters laughing and talking in Yolanda's home. I felt scared. It happened

less than three or four miles from where we lived. Unfortunately, Jose was not the first or the last person killed during my fieldwork.

The violence that occurs in racialized communities like Zapotalito is invisible in the media and ignored by the state justice apparatus because there is a anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, necropolitical state logic that operates in Zapotalito. The racialized dimensions of state and social violence are invisibilized in Mexico. The homicides and disappearances that happen regularly in the Costa Chica region, and the most recent ones in Zapotalito, have affected entire communities and families. It is highly important to have national homicide statistics that aggregate race and ethnicity in addition to gender so that we can have a much clearer understanding of the ways that national violence rates invisibilizes racialized Mexicans. Killings of Black and Indigenous people have an acute, long-reaching impacts on their families and communities. The violence that these communities experience is acutely gendered. Black and Indigenous men are criminalized in the context of narcotraffic and state violence, and this criminalization effectively naturalizes their deaths, erasing them from the landscape of state violence while also reinscribing their traumatic effect on their communities.

This chapter proposes a theory of necro-mestizaje, which I define as the concrete life-threatening consequences of mestizaje on racialized human and non-human beings (i.e., people and land). Building from Achille Mbembe's (2003) concept of *necropolitics* –defined as the politics of death by which the sovereign power decides who lives and who dies-- I argue that necro-mestizaje is the concrete life-threatening consequences of mestizaje on racialized human and non-human beings. Through the necro-mestizaje theory, researchers can analyze the consequences of racialized violence towards Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities and their territories in Mexico. The impacts of necro-mestizaje are also emotional, because the politics of

death have intimate effects on peoples' bodies, including feelings of fear, anxiety, and grief. I argue that to subject a racialized population to systematic, atmospheric fear, stress, and danger is necro-mestizaje's mechanism of slow murder.

According to Mbembe, necropolitics is a conceptual fram that helps us understand how sovereignty's "central power is not the struggle for autonomy but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (2003, 14). In his theorization, Mbembe discusses the colonial occupation of different states to others; for example, Israel occupying Palestine.. Mbembe explains, "the extraction and looting of natural resources by war machines goes hand in hand with brutal attempts to immobilize and spatially fix whole categories of people, or, paradoxically, to unleash them, to force them to scatter over broad areas no longer contained by the boundaries of a territorial state" (2003, 34). That is, necro-politics not only goes hand-in-hand with the politics of death against Black and Indigenous populations, but also it targets nature and land through extraction, pollution, and displacement.

The chameleon-like nature of mestizaje makes it difficult to clearly identify the threats particular to varying racialized populations and contexts. Necro-mestizaje is a compliment to the ways in which mestizaje has been analyzed because it seeks to highlight the violent impacts that mestizaje has specifically toward Black and Indigenous populations and the non-human world in the Mexican context. In this sense, the necro-mestizaje phase of mestizaje is not chameleonic, rather, it is visible and explicit violent towards particular bodies and territories and there is no place for negotiation or inclusion and/or exclusion. Of course, there are white and mestizo populations from the Mexican elite upper and middle classes that also experience the consequences of structural violence in the country because of femicides[65], disappearances, and murders. These

tragic violences happen at every level of society. Nevertheless, some lives and deaths are more grievable (Butler 2006). For example, some lives are protected from violence because they fall under the dominion of patriarch (white and mestizo women for example), while other lives are not grievable (human, non-white) because they are not considered worthy life (for example, Black and Indigenous people). The landscape of grievable and non-grievable lives also include the non-human realm.

Juliet Hooker (2009) and Peter Wade (2000) have explored racial formation in Latin America, placing emphasis on how projects of mestizaje or racial democracy have erased the idea of racism in the region. I am interested in exploring the gendered-intersectional politics of Afro-descendant and Indigenous women's resistance to the color-blind discourse of mestizaje through their histories, experiences, and practices of care towards human and non-human beings.

Peter Wade (2005) argues that there are differences between mestizaje as an ideology and as a lived experience. The ideology of mestizaje and its lived experience are not opposed to one another, but rather "people's experiences of mestizaje are lived within a broader context wherein changing ideologies about the nation, its racialized components and their relative value are disseminated" (2005, 246). In other words, mestizaje is not a state above to below, nor is it an elitist ideology that homogeneously oppresses the non-mestizo working class population.

Necro-mestizaje does not signify the absence of resistance and contestation within the framework of mestizaje. There are examples throughout different contexts in Latin America and even the United States. For example, Juliet Hooker (2005) examines how Indigenous groups have been granted rights in Latin America through an identity-specific politics, while race-based demands made by Black communities are harder to process in neoliberal states. Mestizaje is a space of contestation and negotiation, where Black and Indigenous people at times strategically

employ the ideology of mestizaje to get access to basic rights even as they are excluded or appropriate to discourses of nationhood. Both exclusion and appropriation have material impacts on people's lives. Black and Indigenous people experience inclusion and exclusion unequally. As Wade argues, "There are spaces for blackness and indigenousness, which do not locate them simply as candidates for future elimination through mixture (…) these spaces remain subject to the hierarchies of power and value inherent both in traditional ideologies of *blanqueamiento*, which favors whiteness and devalue blackness and indigenousness, and in more recent ideologies of multiculturalism, which tend to limit the nature of the space blackness and indigenousness can occupy" (Wade 2005, 255). Colonial and structural racial hierarchies still position white and mestizos at the top of the power pyramid and position Black and Indigenous people at bottom.

The Mexican national discourse of mestizaje asserts that racism cannot exist in a racially mixed society. As Mónica Moreno argues, "Mexico has produced a raceless social context where people are not recognized as racialized subjects but live through the consequences and everyday presence of racism. Racelessness (Goldberg 2012) is here understood as a process of racial and racist normalizations that acts in such a way that allows Mexican people to express and be convinced by the commonly spread idea that in Mexico there is no racism because we are all mixed" (Moreno Figueroa 2010, 391). Theorizing the relationship between necropolitics and mestizaje allows us to identify how violence and racism impact Black and Indigenous populations in Mexico despite the rhetoric of national mestizaje, that denies racism and proclaims racial harmony.

Despite the hegemonic discourse of Mexico as a multicultural nation, the rights for Indigenous and Black populations in the Federal Constitution[66] also are reduced to cultural but not economic or political rights. Charles Hale refers to this phenomenon as neoliberal

multiculturalism, because "it is nourished by the recognition of cultural difference, and by extension, of the distinctions between cultural rights that deserve to be recognized and those that do not" (2006, 37). In Mexico, this is exactly has been occurring, especially with the recent recognition of the Black population in the 2019 Federal Constitution. Cultural difference refers to the access to other rights, such as territorial rights, that are not granted to certain cultures; however, this does not contradict with State nationalism. Juliet Hooker (2005a) has named this phenomenon *mestizo multiculturalism*. Even with the recognition of its cultural diversity, mestizaje is re-inscribed and is not in contradiction with other forms of nationalisms. Yásnaya Aguilar, an Ayuuk Indigenous thinker and activist, argues that the Mexican State is a cultural appropriator. Mexicanness constantly appropriates Indigenous cultures as part of the national characteristics: a dance, a gastronomic plate, or symbols from other indigenous culture (Aguilar Gil 2018b). Yásnaya Aguilar also sustains that the Mexican State created the idea of only one Nation, while in reality there are many Indigenous nations in the territory. Therefore, the State denied the importance of reclaiming *Un México sin Nosotros,*[67] that is, the possibility of the existence of different Indigenous Nations without a State (Aguilar Gil 2018a). In this sense, the Mexican identity, read mostly as mestizo, bases its roots in selected characteristics of Indigenous cultures, while erasing or denying Indigenous communities' contemporary access to basic political and economic rights.

Necro-mestizaje impacts people on a bodily, intimate level because it targets the annhilitaiton of Black, Indigenous bodies and their land. Necro-mestizaje is not interested in negotiation of access to rights or recognition of diversit. Rather, necro-mestizaje actively pursues the death or disappearance of identities and land that challenge the mestizo myth. The following sections discuss this intimate, bodily relationship. To follow, I discuss the genealogy of the

homogenizing project of mestizaje, the pervasive violence that is lived in contemporary Mexico, including how the necropolitical system, becomes racialized and gendered as necro-mestizaje in Mexico. Necro-mestizaje is an inherently racialized state violence that targets Black and Indigenous populations. I also describe how necro-mestizaje is gendered, and its specific impact on Black and Indigenous women on the coast of Oaxaca. Black and Indigenous women critique mainstream white and mestizo feminism in the country for erasing their particular experiences. Finally, I will explore the organizing and political work that Rosa, a self-identified Black feminist woman from the coast of Oaxaca, and Yolanda Camacho, a self-identified Afro-Mixteca woman, have done against gender violence with their organizations AMCO (Asociación de Mujeres de la Costa) and Colectiva de la Costa Ña Tundaa, as forms of resistance to necro-mestizaje.

Embodied Fear: Intimate Encounters with Necro-Mestizaje

Zapotalito is a new route for narcotraffic in Mexico. The Costa Chica, which shares land between Guerrero and Oaxaca, has become known for narco-violence; however, it has been more concentrated in Guerrero historically. Currently, there are also places on the Oaxacan coast also are considered dangerous. Zapotalito represents the material space of a juxtaposition. As I explore in Chapter 3, Zapotalito is characterized nationally and internationally as a quiet, little tourist town, with little noted violence.Tourists everyday cross through Zapotalito in order to get to Chacahua island beach, a spot for "alternative surf tourists," who are mostly from Europe, the United States, Australia, and other parts of Mexico. While tourism provides a significant economy for the community, other not-so-underground economies are happening related to drug trafficking.

Pedro, a member of the Zapotalito community, told me that the lagoon is a paradise for drug trafficking. At night, when everyone is at home sleeping, Zapotalito turns into a drug

trafficking center where little planes drop packages of drugs into the lagoon. Local people use their boats to pick up the packages and then move them to the land, and then the drugs are distributed to other places in the region.

I was aware the there was something happening at night. Every day, around 7 or 8 pm when the sun goes down, Zapotalito transforms into a public masculine space where women and children are nowhere to be seen. Women in the community often would tell me not to go out after dark or after the sunset. Women are well aware of the risks. They knew I could be killed, disappeared, hurt, or raped. Women were aware of the dangers of going outside, so I stayed inside at night.

I know that I was a foreigner in the community. I am Mexican, but I am aware of my own privileges as a mestiza middle class woman who studies at a U.S. university and who can leave those spaces that feel dangerous whenever I choose, mark me as a privileged outsider. The women who live in this community cannot go anywhere else and are forced to navigate life in their community. However, even as a privileged mestiza woman, my body is still gendered and sexualized. The epidemic of femicide in Mexico reminded me that I was also at risk. I had to be very careful and thoughtful about my decisions regarding fieldwork, where to go, with whom, and the questions I asked people. Some women in the community would always remind me to not be by myself walking in certain streets, or they would ask a friend or a neighbor to walk with me if they felt I was at risk.

One day, some fishermen discovered two dead men floating in the middle of the lagoons. Each man had a big rock tied to his neck. The rocks made sure they did not float to the surface. The killers did not want them to be found. I don`t know what happened to the bodies, but I know people in the community were very scared. No one wanted to talk about it, but everyone knew what happened. People would say or assume, that probably the men were somehow connected to

the narcotraffickers and they did something wrong. However, the community did not want to investigate because of the risk. They preferred to ignore what happened and continue their lives. As an emotion strategy, people try to "forget" these crimes in order to maintain a sense of normalcy and not live in constant fear or paranoia. Until today, we do not officially know who committed the crime.

As a final example, another disturbing crime in connection with the National Park Administration. The park ranger of the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons was killed in Zapotalito in front of the middle school around noon in 2017. He was a member of the Zapotalito community. There was no clear solution as to how to find the perpetrators responsible for the crime. However, people in the community said tha the killing was connected to the Park ranger's attempts to enforce the land and water use rules of the National Park. Local people assume narcotraffickers were upset, since the enforcement of the rules meant they could not trade drugs and other illicit materials (like wood trafficking from mangroves).

"Blaming the victim" is a common aspect of the narrative of the war on drugs in Mexico sin 2006. If someone is the victim of either narcotraffic violence or femicidal violence, it is the victim's fault (Wright 2011). Living in constant fear is emotionally draining for people. Fear can cause sickness, stress and tiredness in the body. When a person is scared, they are alert and cannot relax. Necro-mestizaje operates against racialized populations through the constant fear, paranoia and stress due to multiple forms of violence.

If women and kids cannot go out after sunset in the community, and if they are not feeling safe in their own surroundings, people feel a lack of freedom. I was often scared many times while living in the community, particularly when I was walking alone or if it was getting dark and I had to take a bus or public transportation from a more rural part of the coast to an urban space.

However, women in the community also have developed mechanisms of mutual care and collective solidarity, in the face of this fear.

Walking together with their friends or neighbors is a practice of safety that women use when they have to travel a bit outside of the community or to go to an event at night. We will never know who they really were, but what was real was the fear, paranoia, and anxiety the situation produced was real – the feeling of being vulnerable to violence. In December of 2018, I was accompanying Rosa and Arcelia (a self-identified Zapotec women) to a series of workshops they organized as part of their organization, AMCO, throughout the Costa Chica region on the topic of gender violence. Arcelia is a psychologist, lawyer, and human rights defender. For both Rosa and Arcelia, it is important to have a direct dialogue and interaction with women in communities. Both of them gave the workshops; Rosa talked about gender and domestic and politic violence, whereas Arcelia directed the introductory dynamics as icebreakers. I was the logistics support and would make sure they had all the materials ready, give handouts to the attendance, and help with whatever Rosa and Arcelia needed. I did not want to interrupt the organization and workshops, and I did not want yet another space where the hierarchy of the "outsider researcher" would be reproduced. At the end of each workshop in different communities, Arcelia would offer her advice as psychologist and as a lawyer to local individual women. In almost every community, there was at least one woman who would have a private, free consultation with Arcelia. Rosa and I would wait for it to end before moving to another community. There were some communities where we arrived and there were not any women present, while at other times, more than150 women were present. Some of the workshops also were organized with the help of the local authorities, through AMCO.

Rosa and Arcelia told me about being aware of the risks of traveling alone along the Coast as a woman, and the risks associated with providing workshops on gender violence in local

communities. Every morning during that mini-tour on the Coast, we would wake up around 5 am, get ready, have breakfast, and drive to the next community. We stayed with Rosa's family in San José del Progreso, and then we also stayed in hotels in Pinotepa. It was a rule of Rosa's to not drive by ourselves or be on highway after the sunset, because it was too dangerous for three women. On one occasion, we drove late night to Pinotepa, a town known for having a lot of homicides and narco-violence. It was around 8 pm and it was dark already. The town was almost completely shut down and no people were out on the streets. Local people know about the implicit schedule of risk after dark. We were really hungry, so we stopped at the only local open restaurant. The dinner became a really anxious and triggering moment because Rosa told us that some narcos probably were sitting next to us because of the way they were dressed and because of their attitude. We were very nervous and did not know how to act, because we did not want our presence to be evident and we wanted to leave immediately. We decided to eat really fast and then ended up asking for the food to go. We barely spoke during the dinner. We left the restaurant feeling anxious and scared. Later, we discussed that maybe they were just ranchers, but Rosa also told us that many local ranchers have links to narcotraffickers. We will never know who they really were, but what was real was the fear and anxiety the situation produced as we felt so vulnerable to violence.

Rosa and Arcelia also talked about how giving workshops against domestic and gender violence in the communities was not well received always by local men and authorities, because the women would believe Rosa and Arcelia. As a consequence, Rosa and Arcelia were "helping women to rebel" against their husbands. In one community, there was a recent case of femicide against a only local woman who had occupied a government position. When we arrived, the local government's office was shut down by men who were outside of it on chairs, surveilling the

building. Rosa told us to be very careful in that community, so we gave the workshop in the main plaza and we left soon after.

These two scenes that happened over the course of a week are examples of the material and concrete feeling of fear and risk that is prevalent through policies and practices of necro-mestizaje. Even me, as a mestiza woman in that region, I am viewed under a patriarchal gaze, which makes my body a possible target of violence. In addition, I was inside a racialized geography, where mostly Black, Indigenous, and racialized populations live. These two scenes portray how necro-mestizaje operates in intimate bodily sensations and emotions, with the constant awareness of risk and life-threatening experiences. It is in these feelings and sensations of fear, anxiety, and constant paranoia, where structures of oppression become tangible to the intimate and physical body.

Racialized and gendered necropolitics entail not only State-directed apparatuses, but also the mechanisms by which gender and racial violence are normalized and ignored by authorities (Smith, 2016). Within the context of Zapotalito, this shows up in the ways the state directly and indirectly collaborates with misogynist practices of inter-personal violence (violence toward partners and friends) and public and general violence. These scenes exemplify the material and concrete feelings of fear and risk that Black and Indigenous women live under the shadow of necro-mestizaje. Even for me, as a mestiza woman viling in the region, I was also read by a racial-patriarchal gaze that marked my body as a possible target of violence in part because of my temporary localization inside the landscape of a racialized geography (a space where mostly Black, Indigenous, and racialized population live). These scenes also portray how necro-mestizaje operates intimately in a bodily level through sensations and emotions, as evidenced by the constant awareness of risk and feelings of being threatened. These feelings and sensations of fear, anxiety,

and constant paranoia are where structures of oppression become palpable to the physical body. The body sweats, trembles, the aching of the stomach, makes you become aware of the spatialized sensations of systemic violence. Fear is no no longer a discourse, a policy, or an abstract concept in the world. Fear becomes a visceral sensation in your bones, your skin, your breathing, and your voice. It is at the site of the body that the nation-state, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism become touchable and seen.

Adaptative Mestizaje: Changes through Time and Space

According to the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* dictionary, *mestizo* signifies, "Said of a person: Born of a father or mother of a different race, especially white and Indian, or Indian and White." The definition of *mestizaje* is, "Crossing of different races" and "Mix of different cultures, which give rise to a new one." The term seems neutral in its definition of the mixture of races or cultures. Mestizaje is that which creates a new result. However, this mixture has ideological and material consequences that affect real people and territories. For Federico Navarrete (2016), mestizo identity is more of a social category than a racial one because it was used to describe people who were not entirely part of the indigenous population nor the Spanish one. Marisol de la Cadena (2000), in the context of Perú, has proposed the term "Indigenous Mestizos" to challenge the fixed and rigid taxonomies of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Mestizos and their closeness to whiteness started to give them some benefits in New Spain.[68] However, in the context of Mexico, the identity "mestizo" has also variations in skin tone and access to privileges. In this sense, as Mónica Moreno argues "Skin color, body features and privilege are attached to each other, but not in a fixed pre-given manner. They also appear and are

perceived differently according to the circumstances and the specific people involved. Relationality makes the attainment of whiteness contextual: depending where, when and with whom you are, a certain space of whiteness as privilege may or not be occupied" (2010b, 398). The self-identified mestizos negotiate their proximity to whiteness -or not- in their everyday life in Mexico.

The definition of mestizo has changed over time, but it has a clear origin in the context of Latin America.[69] The negative conception of mestizo seen as a "bastard" or a "vagabond" shifted from slur to a term of pride during the foundation of the Mexican State as a colonial project. Mestizaje became the term to consolidate the Mexico nation-state (Lund 2012). One of the main differences between the colonial and modern periods in Latin America was "the move away from a rather pluralized understanding of socio-racial complexity, one that showcased multiple racial categories, to more singular and harmonized views of race that acknowledged differences but actively sought to bridge them" (Vinson 2018, 35). Although the idea of harmonious racial mixture became a hallmark of the Mexican nation-state, a whitening ideology was still at the heart of this idea.

The whitening project ideology proposed that racial intermixture would lead to a general whitening of the national population. European immigration was part of the state whitening project. Countries throughout Latin America like Argentina, Brazil, encouraged whitening by inviting European immigrants to migrate in order to mix with the local population. In Mexico, many of the European immigrants did not arrived, and the ones who did (from Italy, Germany, and other countries), began to have endogamic relationships with other Europeans because they did not want to mix with the rest of the "Mexican" population, especially with the indigenous communities (Navarrete, 2016). Of course, this process was not fluent, as many tensions arose

among different groups on the various interpretations of mestizaje in order to decide the hierarchical power of one's identity (Wade 2005).

The indigenismo project emerged from the ideology of whitening and mestizaje.[70] Indigenismo proposes that national progress requires Indigenous assimilation toculture: the Mexican national: mestizaje. José Vasconcelos, one of the intellectuals behind the idea of mestizaje, became the director of the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP), where he developed his ideas into policies. Through the creation of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (1948), the Mexican government created different programs of integration for Indigenous people; for example, schools in rural areas were first created not to better the conditions of Indigenous people, but rather for "the achievement of progress through a culturally unified nation" (Olivera and Pérez 2012). These policies included imposing Spanish as the official language of the nation in the schools, in media, and in all the different levels of the public life. As a result, "in between 1850 and 1950, the majority of Mexicans started to speak the same language (Spanish), to share political values (liberalism), social values (the aspiration to modern economy), cultural identities (nationalist culture) and to consider themselves part of one social group: defined in a tricky way as "mestizo race" (Navarrete 2016, 128). Mexicanness started to have an imagined ideal identity, with a shared language, culture, and characteristics associated with the elites of the country. During these transformations, some Indigenous people were forced to change their language, place of living, way of clothing, beliefs, and social practices. According to Navarrete (2016), these new mestizos "adopted this identity in a voluntary way, because they wanted to ascend in the society" (133). However, I would argue that many people opted to identify as mestizo in order to avoid discrimination, racism, and classism. In this sense, mestizo identity was based on what has been

called the *dis-indigenization of the population* (Navarrete Linares, 2016), while continuing to erase the Black presence in the country.

The trope of mestizaje was also reappropriated in other contexts like the United States. For example, Chicanos/as movement took on an interesting approach to mestizaje. Chicanos employ mestizaje to enact identitarian resistance to geopolitical tensions.[71] According to Juliet Hooker, "the notion of mestizo identity formulated by Latin American intellectuals such as Vasconcelos sought to facilitate regional unity and oppose US dominance in the hemisphere. The trope of Latin Americans' racial advantage vis-à-vis the United States thus emerged at a specific historical moment and served an anti-colonial function for Latin American elites" (Hooker 2017, 158). The mestizo identity was seen as an opposition to that of U.S. white Anglos, and was seen as a major resistance to U.S. imperialism over Latin America.[72]

A clear example of the reappropriation of the mestizo trope in the United States was offered by the feminist Chicana scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa. During the 1980s, Anzaldúa (1987) refers to the *new mestiza* as a new identity that lives in between the borders of the U.S. and Mexico. Anzaldúa relies on Vasconcelos's cosmic race theory and concept of mestizaje to define the new mestiza as an identity of resistance to U.S. white nationalism. Through this perspective, the new mestiza embodies the space in-between two cultures, two nations, and two borders, but also adding a gender and queer reading to mestizaje (Hooker 2017). Anzaldúa, while comparing Vasconcelos theory with whiteness of the U.S, states, "Opposite to the theory of pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. . . . From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands" (2012, 77).

Anzaldúa defends mestizaje and the mestiza identity as one of richness and ambiguity that goes beyond white supremacy in the U.S. context. For Anzaldúa, the mixture of races is, just as Vasconcelos argues, a superior perspective where "the new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode" (2012, 79). In addition, Anzaldúa believes the new mestiza lives in contradiction, but this also allows her to move in between worlds and to adapt to different modes of life as a strength of this identity. Anzaldúa and other U.S. women of color have continued to define a feminism based on their experiences as U.S. Third World women. Still, other contemporary Chicana feminists, such as Theresa Delgadillo, have critically analyzed Anzaldúa's use of mestizaje.[73]

However, Anzaldúa also has been criticized for erasing the Afro-Latin American population experiences and history (Cahuas, 2019[74]). Furthermore, as Hooker argues, "*Borderlands/La Frontera* does not contain any direct analysis of how narratives of mestizaje as harmonious fusion gloss over patterns of forced access to enslaved Black and Indigenous women's bodies" (2017, 192). Anzaldúa did not critique how mestizaje erased the sexual violence committed toward racialized bodies.

Mestizaje was a sexualized and gendered process, wherein race and ethnicity had particular reproductive sexualized functions. Lomnitz (2001) argues, "In Molina, as in practically every pro-mestizo nationalist, the Spanish race came to Mexico through men, and the indigenous element was associated with the feminine. This was true both literally (the mestizo was imagined, in his origin, the child of Spanish man and an Indian woman) and more abstractly, in the characteristics of each race" (53). The fact that the Indian woman was the mother in this scenario signifies the

sexual act as submissive, and was likely the result of sexual violence; in contrast, the White man became the epitome of dominance and positive attributes (Navarrete Linares 2016). Sexual violence is a fundamental element of necro-mestizaje. The reproduction of racialized bodies in order to whiten the population is part of the landscape of necropolitical violence. According to Hooker, "the erasure of sexual violence of slavery in narratives of harmonious mixture was accomplished in part via the hyper-sexualization of black women, whose bodies were then viewed as always willing and available" (2019, 192). In other words, non-European women are only seen in mestizaje as a sexualized-submissive object. Ochy Curiel (2007) argues "The women (Indigenous and Black) were always instrumented to satisfy the desire of the white man and thus ensure the mixture of blood to improve the race" (98). In this sense, the mestizaje project simultaneously erased the sexual violence exerted on women in the narrative, while claiming racial harmony.

In *The Cosmic Race* published in 1925, Vasconcelos argues that through the mixture of supposedly five races, a superior race would result. This "superior" race would be created through sexual attraction by using terms such as beauty and ugliness, but with whiteness and European features being the ideal. The sexual attraction felt by people, according to Vasconcelos,[75] would have prominent white features while Black and Indigenous features would gradually disappear. Therefore, mestizaje, or the cosmic race, is materially a national whitening project.

In regards to Indigenous and Black populations, Vasconcelos continues: "The Indian, by grafting onto the related race, would take the jump of millions of years that separate the Atlantis from our times, and in a few decades of aesthetic eugenics, the Black may disappear, together with the types that a free instinct of beauty may go on signaling as fundamentally recessive and underserving, for that reason, of perpetuation" (Vasconcelos cited in Jaén 1997, 32). Vasconcelos,

through a Darwinist perspective, argues that the Black population will eventually disappear, and Indigenous people will be integrated into a "civilized" world. This quote could be analyzed as the core purpose of the mestizaje ideology in Mexico, which is based in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.

For Vasconcelos, nature, (non-human beings) are going to be favorable for the "fifth race" in terms of resources and natural exploitation.[76] As Joshua Lund affirms, "race becomes meaningful in the real world only as it operates at the historical division of material resources and the institutional vigilance over that division" (Lund 2012, xiv). This helps understand how national project of mestizaje has actual material and spatial consequences in the land: what I call a mestizo geographies in chapter 3.

Mestizaje became the official ideology of Mexican national identity, forever anchoring Mexican nationalism to notions of race. "We are not racists because we are mixed" has become the national way of disavowing race and racism within the nation-state. Mestizaje becomes the neutralizing discourse for denying racism. Yet, Mexico has at least two types of racism: one that values indigenous cultures only as part of the millennial historical past, but not as contemporary political subjects, alongside an anti-Black racism that negates Black population as part of the past and present national history: an imagined community (Anderson 2016). Mexican nationalism via necro-mestizaje ideology, permits anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism against humans and non-humans.

Necro-mestizaje and Gender Violence in Mexico

The "war on drugs" started by the Mexican government in 2006 has taken the lives of approximately 275,000 people[77] . The war has also caused more than 75,000 disappearances as of

November 2020 (Human Rights Watch Report 2020[78]). The militarization of the streets and the war between narco-cartels for territory has created a tense and violent everyday life for Mexican communities. Violence is territorialized, as some states in the country experience more violence than others. As reported by the Mexican Center for Environmental Rights (CEMDA) (2019), between 2012-2019, 500 attacks were perpetrated against environmentalists, of whom 86 were murdered. As result of the militarization of the country, the Mexican Federal army has gained power. Some rape, murder, torture and disappearance cases are believed to be committed by army and police officers in Mexico. We can recall, for example, the case of Ayotzinapa involved the disappearance of 43 Indigenous and Afromexican students from Guerrero on September 26th, 2014. The students were last seen in federal police cars, so the Ayotzinapa is an example of what Mariana Mora (2017) calls the "criminalization of racialized poverty". It is 2021 and the State has yet to conduct a full investigation on the case, while families continue to demand justice. The Ayotzinapa case is a clear example of how racialized men in Mexico are also targets of the necro-mestizaje structure. Usually, their murders and disappearances become criminalized, promoting State and police narratives about their supposed relation to narcotraffic or other criminal organizations, which reproduces racist stereotypes.

The recent government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador created a new police force called *"guardia nacional"*—new police corporation designed to combat insecurity in Mexico. However, almost all of the members of this new force are ex-soldiers which have consistently triggered violence in the country. Violence is tacit and present every day in the country.

In Mexico ten femicides are officially reported every day. The Mexican feminist Marcela Lagarde broadens the concept of feminicide to describe the way in which the Mexican state is

complicit with the murder of women. Mexico has the second highest rate of assassinations of trans women in the Latin America. Images of dead women on highways, in homes, and even universities are common and make the frontpage of newspapers. The bodies of women in Mexico are targets of heteropatriarchal and state violence.

As some feminist have suggested, femicidal violence entails not only the killing of women, but also domestic violence, psychological violence, and the complicity of the State and normalization of these acts (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). *Feminicidio* means "genocide against women and happens when women's historical conditions generate social practices that allow violence against the integrity, health, liberties and life of girls and women" (Lagarde 2008, 216). However, to frame women's rights in legal terms also has its risks. According to Joy James, "As an Enlightenment project, constitutional law posits 'law's innocence,' as law first 'marks out areas' within which racism or sexism are allowed to operate legally and then rationalizes their operation" (1996, 56).

Femicides rates are not aggregated by race or ethnicity, so there is not a clear overview of how racialized women—particularly Black and Indigenous—in the context of Mexico are disproportionately affected by feminicidal violence. According to Marisol Alcocer, "In the case of Black, brown or Afro-descendant women from Guerrero and Mexico, there has been historical social opacity of Afro-Mexican identity and ethnic-racial condition and its relationship with social inequality, within the framework of institutional racism. This has resulted in the lack of visibility and registration of homicide and femicide" (2020, 180). Furthermore, other intersections, such as race, gender, and age contribute to the invisibilization of femicides against racialized children in Mexico, or what Alcocer calls "child racialized femicide" (2021).

In this regard, Black, Indigenous, and other racialized populations are erased from the national statistics on femicides, resulting in the erasure of race as a contributing factor. In the case of Zapotalito and the other communities around the lagoons, I was not able to find resources or specific cases of femicides. However, the cases of homicides of men were evident and known by the community. In regards to men being killed by narcotraffic or structural violence, such killings directly affect their families, especially the women—their partners, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and daughters. In this sense, it could be understood as what Christen Smith names *sequelae* to describe "the gendered, reverberating, deadly effects of state terror that infect the affective communities of the dead" (2016, 31). In the cases where upper-class and white Mexicans or mestizos live, when this elite sector of the country is affected by violence, usually there is more access to justice and legal resources.

Furthermore, from a decolonial feminist perspective, the problem of femicide is that it is "the product of regimes of domination founded on the entanglements of modes of accumulation of capital by dispossessing peoples from their territories, with a racist culture that denies importance to Black lives, combined with forms of patriarchal violence aggressively executed over bodies of Afrodescendant and Indigenous women" (Laó-Montes 2016, 11). The intersections of gendered, racialized, and territorial violence are tangible in the case of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons, as in many other regions in Mexico, and these violences highlight the growing distance from the hegemonic feminist movement.

Black and Indigenous women in Latin America and the U.S. have critiqued the white movement, arguing importance of not separating categories of class, race, or gender, but rather analyzing their mutual constituency in order to better understand better the processes of simultaneous oppressions (Crenshaw 1993; Davis 1983). These non-white feminists critique

feminisms that universalize the "woman" subject. Black and decolonial feminists call for emphasizing the differences between women so that we do not reproduce colonial discourses (Mohanty 2008). Contemporary decolonial feminists in Latin America call on us to understand the particular experiences of Afrodescendant and Indigenous women of the region and thus, the related oppressions of nation-state ideologies, such as mestizaje, racial democracy, or whiteness, that are sometimes reproduced by hegemonic feminists (Espinosa Miñoso 2014a; 2014b; Suárez Nava, Liliana and Hernández, Rosalva Aida 2008). Decolonial Afro and Indigenous women denounce the normalization of sexual, economic, and political violence towards communities and, particularly, towards specific racialized and gendered bodies (Curiel 2007; Tzul, Tzul 2016). Lélia Gonzalez (1988) argues that the first experience of oppression for Black and Indigenous women in Latin America is in its racial dimension. For this reason, the presence of what she calls Amefrican and Amerindian women in Ethnic movements is very active. Is through this activism that Black and Indigenous became aware of sex discrimination with their male-counterparts. However, Gonzalez also argues that Black women are less visible in the feminist movement because they have to work, and they do not have time to participate actively.

The mainstream media tends to portray cases of feminicide concentrated in Mexico City or in other big cities in the country. The media rarely cover femicides that happen outside of the urban spaces, especially in racialized communities and geographies. This is, in fact, a systemic form of racism, where Black and Indigenous women's deaths are invisibilized and erased from the public eye. Which bodies matter the most? In the context of Mexico, the answer is white and mestiza women. This tendency also exists in the Mexican feminist movement. Decolonial Feminist Yuderkys Espinosa (2019) has critiqued what she calls the "feminist reason" to critically describe how the movement usually centers White and Mestiza middle and upper-class women from cities

and aims to impose a universal agenda over all women. This homogenizing approach does not taking into account the different contexts and intersections of race and class. Over the past four years, the visibility of the feminist movement in Mexico has increased. As Espinosa argues (2019), "The reason of feminism responds to the arrogant and imperialist gesture of modern reason as that which proclaims itself as the only true existing reason, that in its maximum evolutionary development, that is, that which develops within its own historical time and within a historical space: Europe" (18). Espinoza adds, "I think then why the gaze produced by white and white-mestizo feminism has always been incomplete, illuminating only one part of the plot of how oppression operates" (2019, 2020). Espinosa then critiques the hegemonic feminist gaze of the reality. When the global feminist movement refers to "third world feminisms," it is important to analyze to whom women from the "third world" refers. Usually, it is upper- and middle-class white and mestiza women who have the platform and space to talk. In this sense, it is urgent to deconstruct the homogeneous idea of the third world to better observe the racial and class hierarchies present within Latin America.

Part of the necro-mestizaje project has been to also erase and eliminate traces of the history of the mestizo population. As a mestiza woman, I am conscious of my race and class privileges in Mexico, despite that the history and genealogy of my family is unknown. I know little about my ancestors apart from my great grandmother, and I believe this experience is part of the whitening project. Mexican mestizo genealogies often erase traces of racialized ancestry. This erasure is the phagocyte mechanism of necro-mestizaje which eliminates the self (the mestizos) and their history. As Yolanda Aguilar from Guatemala argues, "in the ladino experience, the mestizo as an ethnic identity does not exist, because it is based precisely on the fact that it denies or makes invisible its racialized or colonized origins, that is, any contact with oppression" (Aguilar 2019, 68). Therefore,

mestiza women in general inhabit the liminality, not knowing about their history and ancestry, while at the same time having access to privileges in Latin America. Aguilar argues "white, mestizo o ladino feminists have only dedicated to talk about intersections when we have referred to the others that we consider poor, excluded, discriminated, victims, etc. In some cases, we include ourselves, but in general, intersectionality has been of interests as our own experience" (Aguilar 2019, 65). The fact that the mestizo population does not have to think or reflect about their own identity and history reveals the privilege of existing in a body that is close to whiteness and that does not force one to contemplate their history of experienced violence within Mexico. As a mestiza woman, I did not have to question my own "ethnic-racial" identity until I came to the United States and was read as a "Latina" woman. It was until I crossed a national border that I was read as "the Other," but in Mexico, I do not have to think or be aware of how I am perceived, except for my gender.

In Mexico City and other cities around the country, women have organized massive protests on the 8th of march (International Women's Day) and the 24th of November (International Day Against Women's Violence). These protests have gained international media attention because of the number of people who attend and because of the confrontations between the police force and the protesters. One of the main demands from feminists who participate in these protests is the right to an abortion. This demand has been historically linked to the feminist movement; however, as many Black and Indigenous women have critiqued, these demands favor the experience of White and Mestiza middle and upper-class women from the cities. Black, Indigenous, and racialized women in the periphery of the cities and in rural communities have had to organize independently around their own needs, which are often different from mainstream feminists' claims and demands. For example, Rosa María Castro, a self-identified Black feminist

woman from the coast of Oaxaca, founded a women's organization that centers its mission on fighting against gender violence. All of the organization's work occurs across the Oaxacan Coast in different Black and Indigenous communities.

Women suffer rampant domestic violence the region. Forty-six percent of Oaxacan married women have been victims of violence by their partner throughout their romantic relationship. More than a quarter (28.4 percent), equivalent to 94,157 women, suffered extreme violence from their partners, and 40.0 percent of the women who are married or in a relationship speak an Indigenous language; of those, 39.9 percent were raped by their husband or partner throughout their relationship. In addition, 80.4 percent suffered emotional aggression, 56.5 percent economic violence, 53.9 percent physical violence, 21.9 percent sexual violence (Consorcio para el diálogo parlamentario y la equidad en Oaxaca 2011[79]). It is necessary to highlight that there is no specific data for the cases of Afrodescendant women, which is a consequence of the invisibilization of this population in the country. In the case of Guerrero, according to the local human rights organization Tlachinollan, "From November 2015 to November 2016 Tlachinollan has treated 317 women victims of violence, of whom 80% are Na'Savis, Nahuas and Me'Phaas indigenous women; 85 women reported being victims of physical violence, 60 of psychological violence, 60 of economic violence, 57 of patrimonial violence, 31 of institutional violence, 12 of them of community violence and 3 cases of femicide were documented. During 2015, the state of Guerrero had the second largest homicide rate nationwide with 220 women murdered" (Tlachinollan November 2016[80]).

In La Costa Chica region, in addition to gender violence, there is a broader problem with drug trafficking violence—especially in Guerrero[81]—and State repression of social movements. While social movements against the dispossession of territories by transnational projects exist, the

State has attempted to silence such movements through violence. One example is the defense of Río Verde against transnational mining corporations trying to enter in the region.[82] Additionally, teachers have protested against neoliberal education reforms both in Oaxaca and Guerrero. In Guerrero, there is the *policía comunitaria,* an autonomous police force that has secured the region since the 1990s, due to the lack of support from the government, or sometimes the reproduction of violence by the State Police. All these examples shape the materialization of the necropolitical-gendered State that Black and indigenous communities confront in the region. However, it also shows the different mechanisms that local communities have organized to resist violence.

Local Resistances to Gender Violence in the Context of Necro-Mestizaje

Black and Indigenous women, like Rosa and Arcelia, have established inter-ethnic coalitions to resist the prevalent violence and they decided to keep organizing against gender violence in Oaxaca. Rosa, as part of AMCO, has organized yearly events for International Women's day on the 8th of March. During these events, Indigenous, Black, and Mestiza women come together to talk about different issues, such as anti-racism, gender violence, political violence, and what they call empowerment. Rosa also organizes an annual meeting on that same day in Huatulco, Oaxaca. Rosa and other members of AMCO invite Black, Indigenous, and mestiza women from the Costa Chica of Oaxaca and Guerrero regions and some women from Mexico City to a two-day meeting to talk about women's initiatives, proposals, and challenges. I attended the 2018 meeting; there were around 100 women in attendance. Yolanda also takes a big role in this meeting in collaboration with Rosa. Yolanda usually helps organize women from the Coast to travel to Huatulco and she even sometimes helps find cooks or food. During the two days, there were different expositions about gender violence against women, initiatives of alliances and

events, and spiritual rituals for cleansing. This event is fully organized by Rosa, who manages the funds and donations for the event, creates the invitations, and arranges free transportation for women from rural communities across the Coast. Rosa also organizes free food during these days, usually cooked by women who come from communities. For example, in 2018, Rosa's aunt was cooking, but also Brígida from Zapotalito. Additionally, Rosa owns a hotel in Huatulco, so she hosts many of the attendees there as well as looks for other spaces with friends in the city.

Another space Rosa has co-created along with Yolanda, the founder of Colectiva de la Costa Ña Tundaa and who I worked closely in Zapotalito, is the annual meeting of Afro-mexican women. Each year since 2017, Yolanda and Rosa have been organizing this event in different communities around the Coast. In 2018, they organized it in Cerro Hermoso to bring awareness to the environmental degradation and racism that Black and Indigenous are facing through the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons. In 2019, Rosa and Yolanda organized it in Corralero, another coastal community. There were approximately 150 to 200 attendees, coming not only from the coast but also from all across the country, including Afromexican women from Coahuila, where another afromexican community, Mascogos, lives. Attendees also included Indigenous, Mestiza and even some White women, because Yolanda and Rosa invited them. They explained to me that they sought an open space so other women can also hear what Afromexican women are doing in their land. Throughout the three days of the Afromexican encounter in Corrarelo, women from all across the country met to hear presentations about history, current problems in communities, and gender violence. The event also. included music, dancing, and different artistic workshops.

These are only some initiatives that Rosa and Yolanda are organizing in the Coast of Oaxaca, specifically for racialized women. For Rosa and Yolanda, it is important to have these

spaces for women in the Coast, as they can open new opportunities for women. In addition, these events challenge the mestizaje ideology, or necro-mestizaje, by enabling new alliances and challenges to sexism, racism, and colonialism.

Black and Indigenous women's experience are very different and at times distant from the political mobilizations on the 8th of March (International Women's Day) in Mexico City. We can clearly understand Black and Indigenous women's critique of white-mestiza hegemonic feminism when we note the imposing hegemonic agendas and universalizing discourses of women, or even the all-inclusive label "Latin American women". In the end, such homogenizing creates an imagined community based on colonial structures. Therefore, Rosa demands reparations from the macro-structures for the historical violence and anti-Black racism of the Mexican State. Rosa explains,

> And it seems to me that we should talk about two subjects: Repair of damages in Mexico, and especially, in Spain. There would be at least an apology from the Spanish State because they were the ones who enslaved us at that time, and we have not yet addressed these things, we have not addressed them. I have mentioned them I think in Veracruz, but also with father Flaviano as well. Flaviano and I have talked about it, we have said: we must mention it in speeches whenever we have the possibility. That is one of the reasons, because of the treatment they gave them, it is fair. The word justice comes from being equitable, from giving each person what they are entitled to and it is their responsibility, as human beings, to be treated with dignity, as any other person aspires to be treated. That is one, and the other reparation is that as Mexicans, we all have the same rights, and the Afro-Mexican people are not receiving those rights, as the others do. (Personal Interview, April 20 2018, Huatulco, Oaxaca)

In this quote, Rosa directly relates and marks the continuum in between enslavement and colonization within the modern Mexican State. Rosa demands reparations not only from the Mexican State for the lack of recognition and access to basic rights for the Black population, but also from Spain, the settler colonizers. Rosa comments on the demands for reparations by the Mexican State specifically in regard to Black women:

> The issue of Afro-descendant women, how they were enslaved and used by their bosses. I mean, that is a terrible thing. I dare to say that we have to ask the Mexican State for reparations because there is no worse thing than to sully the body of a woman, and that unfortunately to continue to see in Mexico now in this modern times. We continue to see it when we are seeing disappeared women, when we are seeing women being raped. In other words, the State continues to do in a very cruel way. The damage that was done at that time and that no politician has the sensitivity, the ability to think about the others who suffered that, at that time, and the humiliation. One of the damages is also the removal of the language, the mother tongue, of the Africans who arrived, because they surely had their languages.

In other words, Rosa is demanding historical reparations that have direct consequences in the present context. The policies and practices of necro-mestizaje as a racist and sexist system, connects the violence excerpted against Black women during the colonial enslavement time to the present disappearances and femicides linked to the Mexican State. Such demands include historical reparations from the Mexican State that continues to recognize Black and Indigenous populations on paper as part of the nation, while also generating different types of violence against them.

The emotional and political work that Rosa and Yolanda do in the Pacific Coast is important for them in the context of different violences, as well as allows them to build collective spaces for women in the communities. Rosa and Yolanda believe in the importance of creating spaces for Black, Indigenous, and racialized women. Rosa and Yolanda do this without much institutional or financial support, with most support coming from autonomous organizing. Such organizing confirms their continued efforts toward defending human and non-human life in the Pacific Coast.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have proposed the concept of necro-mestizaje. As I recount in this chapter, mestizaje is a complex ideology that has different meanings across geographies and time, and that embodies a space for negotiation and appropriation for Black and Indigenous populations in

Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America to gain access to rights and resources. However, on the basis of this ideology, there is still a structure that does not move, which is a homogenizing project. Even with the opportunities to mobilize mestizaje discourse in favor of racialized populations to be seen or recognized as part of the discourse, white and mestizo populations still are on the top of the ethno-racial hierarchy in Mexico. Mestizaje indeed can be chameleonic as it adapts to new conditions through time and space. As many scholars have suggested, there is a possibility of exclusion/ inclusion within the mestizaje project. However, when the mestizaje ideology is encompassed with necropolitics, we can see the deathly material consequences on Black and Indigenous communities and their territories. Necro-mestizaje can be understood as the life-threatening strategies used to disappear racialized bodies and territories in Mexico.

I have made a genealogy of the Mestizo identity and category, including how it started from being a category in the caste system to describe a rather negative trait, also known as a vagabond. However, with time, Mestizo started to become an identity that gained privileges other over identities and categories because of its closeness to whiteness and the colonizer. Then, a period of transition occurred from the colonial time to the modern Mexican state, and it is in this post-independence period where mestizo as a figure becomes central to the nation-state formation. Multiple readings of mestizaje and mestizo exist, and have transcended borders (e.g., in the United States); however, there are tacitly material life consequences of a whitening project.

In the context of political, state, narco, and structural violence in Mexico, there is no doubt that necropolitics are operating against particular bodies. However, when the necropolitics add a gender, class, and race component, it becomes evident which bodies and lands are going to be targeted. It is through dispossession, murder, disappearance, or just invisibilization that necro-mestizaje operates. These necropolitics also have affective impacts on the people who live in

racialized spaces. Such impacts include feelings of fear, anxiety, and grief. In this sense, necro-mestizaje not only operates in an ideological side, but also has living impacts in the first territory and first scale of materiality: the body. Necro-mestizaje thus also becomes an intimate embodied experience, a sense of constant awareness in order to protect human and non-human life. Necro-mestizaje has an intimate and bodily scale through the feeling of fear, and stress in racialized populations.

I have portrayed the everyday experiences of life in Zapotalito around the lagoons, and the pervasive yet tangible lived violence in the region as part of the system apparatus. However, it is in this context that Black, Indigenous, and racialized women also are resisting this violence. In the last part of the chapter, I described the emotional and political labor that Rosa and Yolanda and their respective organizations, AMCO and Colectiva de la Costa Ña Tundaa, have in the coastal area against gender violence and racism. By providing workshops to Black, Indigenous, and mestiza women in different communities throughout the region of Costa Chica in Oaxaca, Rosa and Yolanda are trying to destabilize the patriarchal practices and to have a direct intervention against domestic and political violence towards women as well as against structural racism. This work entails concrete risks that can be life-threatening, but Rosa and Yolanda persist despite their awareness of these risks.

Even though these body-situated emotions and sensations are prevalent in the region, especially for Black women like Rosa and Yolanda, they have decided to continue working and organizing with women and building community organizing and inter-ethnic alliances to protect their own lives and the life of their land. Yet, the local people continue to contest these necropolitical spaces and discourses by affirming their existence not only in cultural terms, but also in territorial, affective, and socio-political terms. Through grief, but also through a feeling of

radical hope, Black and Indigenous populations are refusing to disappear from the geography, and they insist on their presence in the country.

Chapter 6:

Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have shown the ways in which necropolitics operate in a mestizaje context in Mexico, targeting not only human but also other-than-human beings and their mutual imbrication. Particularly, I propose the concept of necro-mestizaje, a phase of mestizaje, in which negotiation of inclusion and access to basic rights to Black and Indigenous populations is eliminated and violence becomes a tool for the homogenization of the Nation.

I examined the case of ecocide at the Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons in the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca and the ways in which Black and Indigenous populations who live around the lagoons are affected by environmental racism. I argue that people in the community of El Zapotalito around the Chacahua Pastoría Lagoons experience environmental racism in the context of a supposedly racelessness nation. Through an ethnographic lens, I argue that local people around the lagoons are experiencing grief due to the loss of human and other-than-human beings caused by multiple forms of violence. I propose the concept of grieving geographies to explore spaces of complex loss due to violence of human and other-than-human beings. However, grief becomes an act of refusal and becomes a potentiality for political mobilization and radical hope. By grieving and mobilizing, Black and Indigenous women insist on presence by taking care of their families, their community, and the lagoons. The ethnographic analysis demonstrates how dispossession of territory and land, through pollution, has not only economic and political consequences, but also causes emotional distress on the population.

This dissertation calls attention to grief as a source of radical hope for solidarity, mutual aid, counter-cartographies, and practices of care between human and other-than human. Grief is a

complex sentiment that requires stillness and movement at the same time. I was interested in exploring how grief can be an anti-capitalist practice, where another conception of time is built, a time that centers slowness in order to feel and think, and to take care of their communities. However, grief also becomes a fuel for mobilization, to organize for environmental justice but also to think of a different future for their land. I illustrated how Black and Indigenous women construct everyday forms of survival and repair of their communities and land. Therefore, this research centers on the practices of Black and Indigenous women to exist, defend, and preserve their territory and water.

Significance and Broader Contributions

This dissertation contributes to the literature on racism and anti-racism in Latin America and Mexico, particularly regarding intersections with the environment. Literature on environmental movements in Mexico tend to focus on the land and political struggles without the race component. There are few studies about the intersection of environment and Afrodescendant populations in Mexico (Masferrer León and Trejo 2019). In this sense, this research will contribute and broaden the analysis of environmental racism in Mexico.

This research also seeks to cross national borders and engage in dialogue with African Diaspora Theory in the Americas and politics of insurgency and resistance in the context of a gendered-necropolitical world. In this sense, one of my contributions is a gendered analysis of necropolitics (Mbembe 2003b), emphasizing the effects on racialized women's bodies.

Indigeneity first, and in a second later phase Blackness, in Mexico, has been studied in an either ethno-historical and identity formation approach (Velázquez, María Elisa 2011; Velázquez, 2006; Velázquez Gutiérrez and González Undurraga 2016; Varela-Huerta 2014;

Lara, 2010a; Masferrer León 2013). This research intends to add to the few studies that exist on racial formation and racism in Mexico. As Omi and Winant argued, "… this does not mean that race somehow created class or sex/gender conflict, or that it is more central than other major central cleavages, of the analytical framework of intersectionality" (2015, 245). In this sense, I am not trying to center my analysis either on racism or sexism as separate oppressive structures, but rather on their interrelated structured power.

My research also contributes to the field of identity politics by extending further from the traditional frame of studying either Indigeneity or Blackness. I researched identity politics from an intersectional perspective and took into account inter-ethnical solidarity with the tensions involved in it such solidarity efforts (see Hooker 2009; Ng'weno 2007; Mollett 2006). As part of the literature of identity politics in Latin America, my research contributes to an intersectional approach on identity politics, because through it, we can understand political struggle efforts that encompass gender, race, and class inequalities, and then addresses them simultaneously.

Finally, through an emphasis on emotions and the body, I contributed to emotions theory literature by focusing on the role of emotions in political mobilizations from a gendered, racialized perspective. I explore emotions through the geography feminist methodology of body-maps. I argue that body-maps are a counter-mapping tool that serves to re-write the land of Black and Indigenous women, and to reclaim their existence in the territory. Body-maps offered a space for collective sharing of emotions and thoughts about their community and the problems they face in everyday life. The dying lagoons were represented in all of the maps, as well as other issues, such as the presence of drugs. Through body-maps, the women also located in what part of the body they feel emotions, such as sadness and anger, but also joy and love. In this sense,

the body was explored as a space and territory. In these body-maps, we identify the emotional impacts of environmental racism in their communities and on their own bodies.

Emotions were not only experienced by the subjects under study, but also emotions became a central methodological endeavor. In particular, I examined how emotions and affect influence my role as a researcher and my political involvement with Black and Indigenous women's organizations in Mexico.

Chapter 1 explored grief as a method and how emotionally engaged research can bring attention to other forms of collaboration through the affect, while at the same time being aware of power relations and challenges.

Chapter 2 exposed how conservation discourses around National Parks and nature are other ways of dispossessing Black and Indigenous people in Mexico, while bringing to the light a main paradox. Conservation discourses center the "protection" of nature while dehumanizing and policing the Black and Indigenous local people who inhabit these territories—in this particular case, the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons. However, while local inhabitants are policed and criminalized for using natural resources for their own survival, upper and middle-class White and Mestizo people from the Global North and Mexico travel to the Chacahua-Pastoría National Park to "enjoy" a tropical fantasy based on ideas on wilderness. In actuality, these travelers are exploiting nature and reproducing colonial relations with racialized populations. In the midst of tourism as another form of dispossession and colonial continuum, Zapotalito, similar to many other communities in Oaxaca, have managed to maintain their communities through autonomous non state-centered forms of organizing called tequio. Tequio permitted not only the initial foundation of the community, through the collective building of schools, houses, and roads, but also it has

worked in times of emergency, such as the massive death of fish in 2017. Tequio, then, becomes a central part of community organizing that does not require the state nor capital.

Chapter 3 explored the causes of the ecocide of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons and the how it is connected directly to politics of elimination through slow death of a body of water, and as a consequence, the potential disappearance of a Black and Indigenous space and land. In this chapter, I proposed the concept of grieving geographies to describe spaces of complex collective loss due to interconnected forms of violence, where the deaths of humans and other-than-humans collide and create compounding feelings of pain and sorrow. Grieving geographies in the particular case of Zapotalito, explores the grief felt by local residents due to the slowly death of the Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons, as well as the death of members of their community due to narco and State violence. However, grief becomes a fuel for political mobilization through radical hope—specifically, hope for the lagoons to be saved and for the communities to survive. I explore the different forms in which Black and Indigenous women in Zapotalito create initiatives of mutual aid projects, inter-ethnic solidarity, and practices of care as ways to challenge the ecocide and the necropolitical system.

Chapter 4 addressed the material form of the mestizaje ideology through mestizo geographies. In other words, the ways in which the whitening project of mestizaje also has territorial consequences, where Black and Indigenous territories are dispossessed through pollution, tourism, or transnational extractivist megaprojects. I described the ways in which maps have been a historical colonial tool for the nation-state to claim land and ownership. However, I examined the ways in which body-maps, a feminist methodology, become a counter-hegemonic form of mapping that centers the existence and presence of Black and Indigenous women. Furthermore, through these body-maps, the intimacy and affective relationship between women

and their land becomes evident. The ecocide of the lagoons not only affects them economically and socially, but also emotionally. Body-maps become a way of challenging the threat of whitening and colonizing the land through colonial maps and dispossession. Body-maps become a tool for reclaiming land and water for Black and Indigenous women.

Chapter 5 focused on the ways in which, in the context of mestizaje ideology, even if there is space for inclusion and exclusion of Black and Indigenous people, the material reality confronts the necropolitical apparatus of an homogenizing project: necro-mestizaje. Aside from being an ideology, mestizaje has material effects on territories, as seen in the case of Chacahua-Pastoría lagoons and the surrounding communities. Necro-mestizaje also has effects on the first territory: the body. I explored how through feelings of fear and paranoia, necro-mestizaje operates in an intimate bodily way that can either stop people from mobilizing, or also slowly kill them from stress. I also investigated the gendered perspective of necro-mestizaje in which Black, Indigenous, and racialized women are targets of violence in Mexico. The mainstream feminist Mexican movement has failed to have an intersectional analysis, and rather, as many Black and Indigenous thinkers and scholars have pointed out, it continues to reproduce coloniality and racism within the women's movement. Therefore, I discussed local initiatives by Black and Indigenous women who have worked to challenge necro-mestizaje. The initiatives consist of community-based workshops on the subjects of domestic violence, gender violence, and economical violence. These organized projects center life, repair communities, and re-write Black and Indigenous women in Mexico.

As I am writing these conclusions, I feel the necessity to explore my journey on this research and the challenges I encountered. Writing this dissertation was not easy. In the last year, writing through a global pandemic required a lot of emotional labor, and grief became a present sentiment for millions of people around the world. After my mother's passing, I found it very hard

to have motivation for a while. I even thought of leaving the doctoral program for a period so I could focus on my grief, because it occupied all of my mind and emotions. However, it was also sitting with my grief that made me feel motivated to finish this academic commitment. I wanted to honor the women in my family who did not have access to education, and to honor my mother who was an elementary school teacher, because she taught me how to read and write. I also had a commitment to the women in Zapotalito about writing this dissertation. In other words, it was through grief that I also encountered the hope and strength to continue with this project. Psychologist Elizabeth Kubler Ross named the "stages" on grief. However, through my own experience and reading contemporary works around grief, I have found that grief is not linear. Grief comes in waves, and sometimes comes in unexpected moments. Grief sometimes shows up as anger, and other times as nostalgia or a deep sadness, but it also comes as a reminder to stay present and to insist on the generation of life.

Being a middle-class mestiza in a Black and Indigenous community meant that I had to constantly check my privileges and position of power as a researcher. Black and Indigenous women opened up to me in dialogue about my own positionality and the ways in which my work could collaborate to their environmental justice efforts. Even as a young mestiza woman based in a U.S. University, my body was always at risk of being read as an available feminine body. I had to be very careful about the spaces within the community that I was moving in, for my own safety. Yolanda would repeat to me the risks of doing gender violence workshops in the community so she would tell me to be careful on how we were doing the activities as part of her organization, Colectiva de la Costa Ña Tundaa. Another big challenge was traveling through the Coast by myself. Sometimes I would have to move from one community to another in order to do some interviews, but it was always advised that I traveled during the day and never after the sun went

down. I had to be always highly aware of my surroundings and sometimes it took an emotional toll on me.

The writing process of this dissertation was not linear either, because it had the rhythm of my own grief. As I have said before, it was through the deep exploration of my own grief that I began to better connect with the subject of my research. It was the connection of grief that motivated me to theorize on the potentialities of grief for social movements, particularly grief due to different forms of violence. I want to highlight again, however, that power relations on fieldwork never disappeared. Even as an "emotional bridge" was created with the community through grief, I was still seen as a middle-class mestiza woman whose research is based at a U.S. university. The interaction with local women was intimate, but the differential social identities and statuses were constantly present. An interesting thing to note, though, is that the interaction with men was still marked by my own privileges, yet I was still read as a young single woman and gendered norms interactions were expected. These complex relations were present during all my fieldwork and while I write my dissertation, I am still grappling with them.

My hope is that this dissertation will set a precedent for future work on the intersections of race, gender, and environment in Mexico. Furthermore, I hope this research will encourage others to develop new analytical approaches on race, gender and environment. Furthermore, I hope new research will be focusing on support local efforts toward environmental justice in the region.

Annex: The First Encounter: "Are You a Researcher of an Ally?"

I decided I wanted to go to the coast of Oaxaca to work with issues regarding racism and sexism in Mexico. In the summer of 2016, I went for the first time to the Coast of Oaxaca, specifically to Puerto Escondido, to meet with some Black women who I had been talking with through social media. I arrived at Puerto Escondido nervous but also excited for the future and what could come from the expected meeting. I woke up the next morning with a message on my Facebook from Yolanda Camacho, a woman who later would become very important to my work and to my life. Yolanda told me to meet her in a hotel where an event was happening. I got ready for the day and headed to the hotel. When I arrived at the hotel, the receptionist asked me if I was going to participate in the event. I said yes without knowing what was happening. I was in front of a big wooden door and when I entered the room, I saw a large table with many women around it. The scene looked like a workshop of some sort. I recognized Yolanda from her profile picture on her Facebook. She was at the back of the room and I headed toward her. I felt ashamed for interrupting the workshop and for being an unknown person to everyone. However, Yolanda recognized me and smiled. She told me to integrate myself into one of the teams for the workshop. I went to one of the tables and seated with the team. It was at that moment that I realized this was a workshop on Black women and leadership.

The activity consisted of talking about forms of gender violence and writing them down. The women talked about domestic violence, physical violence, and emotional and economical violence. After discussing this topic, two members of the team had to go in front to share their findings with the larger group. Our smaller group selected me and one other young woman to represent our team. We shared with the rest of the group the results of the discussion. After hearing

every team, it was lunch time. I was walking towards the restaurant of the hotel when Yolanda told me that it was going to be during the lunch that she was going to introduce me to the rest of women and that was where I could explain my Project to them. This meeting occurred after I had shared with Yolanda through Facebook Messenger, a few months prior, that I wanted to have the opportunity to share my dissertation proposal with the women and solicit feedback. However, I did not expect it to happen so soon. I did not feel prepared, but I knew that I needed to do it. In the middle of the lunch, Yolanda called me and in front of the group of women, who were divided in different tables, she introduced me: "Comrades, this is Yoalli, she is from Puebla but she is studying in Texas. She wants to work with us, but also she will explain her project to us. So she will go table by table to talk to you and we can let her know what we think." I was very nervous and did not know how to begin to explain my project. I wanted to be more prepared, but I had no other option. I went to each table one at a time. There were about 6 or 7 women at each table, and I told them that my project was about Black and Indigenous women who work in the community with the goal of exploring how they confront racism and sexism in their everyday lives. Each table had different reactions. At one table, for example, a woman recommended me to do oral history with women because this is usually a masculinized form of history that erases the experiences of women. At another table, the women told me they were excited about the project, while at another, the women they did not say anything, so I doubted whether they were interested. However, at the last table, something very important for me happened.

One of the women in this team asked me straight: "so, are you coming as a researcher or as an ally?" I was not expecting this question but it also made me very happy. When I was about to answer, she stopped me again and said: "think about it very well. This is not a game. Think about the implications of your answer." The rest of the table remained in silence, and I also muted

myself because I felt that silence and thoughtfulness were needed as a form of respect for the question. After some seconds, I answered that I was coming as an ally. The woman then replied me “Ok. Because being an ally means that you are not going to come as other academics just to steal our knowledge, you have to commit to ourselves to return what we give you.” And she continued with another important question, “Do you believe in objectivity or subjectivity?” I responded that I was coming as a subjective person, that I did not believe in objectivity as I was crossed by experiences and my own perspective and interpretation of the reality. She responded, “good, because we don't like when academics again come and act believing in distancing from us.” Another woman at the table, who I believe was trying to be nice, said, “But she already is doing something, she came and shared her project before starting, there is a difference.” After that conversation, we reached an agreement and another woman took out a piece of paper and a pen; all of them started to write down their names and phone numbers for the next year, when I was going to spend a whole year in the Pacific Coast.

This conversation remains in my memory because it represents what I wanted to create with the women I was planning on working with. I did not want an objective research approach; I did not want only to be a scholar going to their community. I truly wanted to be an ally; however, as I would understand later, it is a difficult task to become an ally.

I came back to Austin, Texas after that first conversation and changed my project to incorporate what they have told me during that first visit. In the summer of 2017, I returned to Mexico with the plan of staying 1 year for my fieldwork. The return, though, was not how I planned it. I was packing all my stuff and putting it in boxes for storage when I received a call from my sister in Mexico: my father was in the hospital. He had surgery and had a complication, which put him in intensive care. I felt a punch in my stomach. My mom then called me and told me I needed

to fly that day, because they did not know what would happen. My original flight was for one week ahead and I could not make changes to the flight, so I bought a ticket to fly 4 hours later that afternoon. Just like that, I had to pack for a whole year with all of these emotions floating in my body. I was not able to concentrate fully, so I just quickly grabbed anything that I could think of at that moment and my partner took me to the airport. It was the worst trip of my life. I was scared and anxious for being so far away. I finally made it home later that night and went straight to the hospital. I spent one week in the hospital with my mom, taking care of my dad. My father finally was out of risk and was sent home after a week. However, I could not leave to start fieldwork because I wanted to make sure he was feeling better, and because I wanted to help my mother. I stayed in my hometown, Puebla, for a whole month because my body and my mind could not manage being in another place. The emotional pain was real.

After this period, I finally moved to the Coast of Oaxaca. I rented an apartment in Puerto Escondido on a big city on the coast, so it worked as my home-base while traveling along the coast. I called Yolanda when I arrived. She told me she had moved to a new community that I had never heard of, called *El Zapotalito.* Zapotalito would become later the most important place for my research, as I frequently traveled between Puerto Escondido and Zapotalito.

Bibliography

Aguilar Gil, Yásnaya Elena. 2018a. "Nosotros Sin México: Naciones Indígenas y Autonomía." *Nexos*, May.

———. 2018b. "El Estado Mexicano Como Apropiador Cultural." *Ágora*, July, 130–33.

Aguilar, Yolanda. 2019. *Femestizajes*. Guatemala, Guatemala: F&G Editores.

Albrecht, Glenn, Gina-Maree Sartore, Linda Connor, Nick Higginbotham, Sonia Freeman, Brian Kelly, Helen Stain, Anne Tonna, and Georgia Pollard. 2007. "Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change." *Australian Psychiatry* 15: 95–98.

Alcocer Perulero, Marisol. 2020. "¿Feminicidio de Afrodescendientes En México? Lo Que No Se Nombra No Existe." *Abya Yala. Revista Sobre Acesso à Justiça e Direitos Nas Américas* 4 (1): 163–93.

———. 2021. "Feminicio Infantil Racializado En México. Un Tema Pendiente." *Ichan Tecolotl*, no. 346.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. 2005. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Perverse Modernities. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.

Amsden, Jackie, and Rob VanWynsberghe. 2005a. "Community Mapping as a Research Tool with Youth." *Action Research* 3 (4): 357–81.

———. 2005b. "Community Mapping as a Research Tool with Youth." *Action Research* 3 (4): 357–81.

Anderson, Benedict Richard O'Gorman. 2016a. *Immagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2. edition. London: Verso.

———. 2016b. *Immagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2. edition. London: Verso.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 2012. *Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Berlant, Lauren. 2007. "Slow Death (Sovereignity, Obesity, Lateral Agency)." *Critical Inquiry* 33 (4): 754–80.

Berry, Maya, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sara Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada. 2017. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 537–65.

Bullard, Robert D. 1993. *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots.* Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press.

Burkhart, Brian. 2016. "Locality Is a Metaphysical Act- Theories of Coloniality and Indigenous Liberation Through the Land: A Critical Look at Red Skin, White Masks." *APA Newsletter-Indigenous Philosophy* 15 (2): 2–6.

Butler, Judith. 2006. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London ; New York: Verso.

Cabnal, Lorena. 2010. *Acercamiento a La Construcción Del Pensamiento Epistémico de Las Mujeres Indígenas Feministas Comunitarias de Abya Yala.* Madrid: ACSUR- Las Segovias.

———. 2017. "Tzk'at, Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales Del Feminismo Comunitario Desde Iximulew-Guatemala." *Ecología Política* 54: 98–102.

Caruso Haviland, Linda. 2018. “Considering the Body as Archive.” In *The Sentient Archive. Bodies, Performance, and Memory.*, 1–18. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Castillo Gómez, Amaranta Arcadia. 2003. “Los Estereotipos y Las Relaciones Interétnicas En La Costa Chica Oaxaqueña.” *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* 46 (188–9): 267–90.

Colectivo de Geografía Crítica del Ecuador. 2017. “Geografiando Para La Resistencia.” *Journal of Latin American Geography* 16 (1): 172–77.

Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo. 2017. *Mapeando El Cuerpo-Territorio. Guía Metodológica Para Mujeres Que Defienden Sus Territorios.* Quito,Ecuador: Red Latinoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Sociales y Ambientales,Miradas críticas del territorio desde el feminismo,Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, CLACSO,.

Cope, R. Douglas. 1994. *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cornwall, Andrea. 1992a. “Body Mapping in the Health RRA/PRA.” *RRA Notes*, no. 16: 69–76.

———. 1992b. “Body Mapping in the Health RRA/PRA.” *RRA Notes*, no. 16: 69–76.

Craib, Raymond B. 2004. *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes*. Latin America Otherwise. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.

Crampton, Jeremy W. 2009. “Cartography: Performative, Participatory, Political.” *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (6): 840–48.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1993. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity, Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43: 1241–89.

Cunsolo, Ashlee, and Karen Landman. 2017. “Introduction. To Mourn beyond the Human.” In *Mourning Nature. Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief.*, 3–26. Canada: McGill University Press.

Curiel, Ochy. 2007. “Crítica Poscolonial Desde Las Prácticas Políticas Del Feminismo Antirracista.” *Nómadas* 26: 92–101.

Datta, Anindita, ed. 2020. *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

Davidson M., David. 1981. “El Control de Los Esclavos Negros y Su Resistencia En El México Colonial, 1519-1650.” In *Sociedades Cimarronas. Comunidades Esclavas Rebeldes En Las Américas.*, edited by Richard Price, 79–100. Siglo Veintiuno.

Davis, Angela Y. 1983. *Women, Race & Class*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.

Davis, Dána-Ain, and Christa Craven. 2016. *Feminist Ethnography: Thinking through Methodologies, Challenges, and Possibilities*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

De la Cadena, Marisol. 2010. “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics.’” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 334–70.

Delaney, David. 2010. “The Space That Race Makes.” *The Professional Geographer* 54 (1): 6–14.

Delgadillo, Theresa. 2011. *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative*. Latin America Otherwise. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Descartes, René. 2010. *Discurso Del Método*. Madrid: Colección Austral-ESPASA CALPE.

Domosh, Mona, and Joni Seager. 2001. *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World*. New York: Guilford Press.

Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011. "Introducing New Feminist Political Ecologies." *Geoforum* 42: 129–32.

Escobar, Arturo. 1999. "After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology." *Current Anthropology* 40 (1): 1–30.

Espinosa Miñoso, Yuderkys. 2014a. "Etnocentrismo y Colonialidad En Los Feminismos Latinoamericanos: Complicidades y Consolidación de Las Hegemonías Feministas En El Espacio Transnacional." In *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología y Apuestas Descoloniales En Abya Yala*, 309–24. Colombia: Universidad del Cauca.

———. 2014b. "Una Crítica Descolonial a La Epistemología Feminista Crítica." *El Cotidiano. Revista de La Realidad Mexicana Actual* 184 (March): 7–12.

———. 2019. "Hacer Genealogía de La Experiencia: El Método Hacia Una Crítica a La Colonialidad de La Razón Feminista Desde La Experiencia Histórica En América Latina." *Revista Direito e Praxis* 10 (03): 2007–32.

Fals Borda, Orlando. 2009. *Una Sociología Sentipensante Para América Latina*. Bogotá, Colombia: Siglo de Hombres Editores, CLACSO.

Federici, Silvia. 2010. *Calibán y la bruja mujeres, cuerpo y acumulación originaria*. Madrid, España: Traficantes de Sueños.

Fregoso, Rosa Linda, and Cynthia L. Bejarano, eds. 2010. *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Américas*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press.

Gastaldo, D., L. Magalhães, C. Carrasco, and C. Davy,. 2012. *Body-Map Storytelling as Research: Methodological Considerations for Telling the Stories of Undocumented*

Workers Through Body Mapping. m http://www. migrationhealth.ca/undocumented-workers-ontario/body-mapping.

Gastaldo, Denise, Natalia Rivas-Quarneti, and Lilian Magalhães. 2018. "Body-Map Storytelling as a Health Research Methodology: Blurred Lines Creating Clear Pictures." *Forum: Qualitative Social Reseach* 19 (2): Art.3.

Geobrujas. 2018. "Subvertir La Cartografía Para La Liberación." *Revista de La Universidad de México*, no. Mapas (July): 40–43.

Gómez Correal, Diana Marcela. 2019a. "Emociones, Epistemología y Acción Colectiva En Contextos de Violencia Socio-Política. Reflexiones Breves de Una Experiencia de Investigación Feminista." In *Otras Formas de (Des)Aprender. Investigación Feminista En Tiempos de Violencia, Resistencias y Decolonialidad.*, 77–90. Bilbao; [Tarragona: Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea ; Hegoa ; Seminario Interdisciplinar de Metodología de Investigación Feminista.

Gonzalez, Lélia. 1988. "For an Afro-Latin American Feminism." In *Confronting the Crisis in Latin America: Women Organizing for Change*, 95–101. Isis Internacional.

Hale, Charles R. 2001. "What Is Activist Research?" *Items & Issues: Social Science Research Council.* 2 (1).

———. 2005. "Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28 (1): 10–28.

———, ed. 2008. *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. Global, Area, and International Archive. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Halim Chowdhury, Elora. 2007. “Geographies of Mourning.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28 (3): 113–40.

Hanchard, Michael George. 1998. *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945 - 1988*. 4.printing, and 1. paperback printing. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

Harley, J.B. 2011. “Deconstructing the Map.” In *Classics in Cartography: Reflections on Influential Articles from Cartographica*, edited by Martin Dodge, 273–94. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.

Henry, Rosita. 2012. “Gift of Grief: Performative Ethnography and the Revelatory Potential of Emotion.” *Qualitative Research* 12 (5): 528–39.

Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída. 2015. “Hacia Una Antropología Socialmente Comprometida Desde Una Perspectiva Dialógica y Feminista.” In *Prácticas Otras de Conocimiento (s): Entre Crisis, Entre Guerras. Tomo II.*, 83–106. Mexico: IWGIA, Cooperativa Retos, Programa Democracia y Transformación Global, Talleres Paradigmas Emancipatorios Galfisa, Proyecto ALICE, Taller Editorial La Casa del Mago.

———. 2019. “Racialized Geographies and the ‘War on Drugs’: Gender Violence, Militarization, and Criminalization of Indigenous Peoples.” *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24 (3): 635–52.

Hill Collins, Patricia. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10054558.

Hoffman, Odile. 2014. “The Renaissance of Afromexican Studies.” In *Blackness and Mestizaje in Mexico and Central America*, 81–116. New Jersey: Africa World Press.

Hoffmann, Odile and Lara, Gloria. 2012. “Reinvindicación Afromexicana: Formas de Organización de La Movilización Negra En México.” In *Las Poblaciones Afrodescendientes de América Latina y El Caribe. Pasado, Presente y Perspectivas Desde El Siglo XXI.*, 25–46. Universidad Nacional Tres de Febrero, Centro de Estudios Avanzados de la Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Programa de Relaciones Internacionales y Estudios Africanos del Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios sobre Cultura y Sociedad y la Cátedra UNESCO.

Hooker. 2005a. “Beloved Enemies. Race and Official Mestizo Nationalism in Nicaragua.” *Latin American Research Review* 40 (3): 14–39.

Hooker, Juliet. 2005b. “Beloved Enemies. Race and Official Mestizo Nationalism in Nicaragua.” *Latin American Research Review* 40 (3): 14–39.

———. 2005c. “Beloved Enemies: Race and Official Mestizo Nationalism in Nicaragua.” *Latin American Research Review* 40 (3): 14–39.

———. 2005d. “Indigenous Inclusion/Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship in Latin America.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2): 285–310.

———. 2009. *Race and the Politics of Solidarity*. Transgressing Boundaries. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2017. *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, Du Bois, and Vasconcelos*. Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

James, Joy. 1996. *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press.

Jones, Gareth A. 1996. “Dimantling the Ejido: A Lesson in Controlled Pluralism.” In *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, 188–203. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kant, Immanuel. 2003. *Crítica de La Razón Práctica*. Buenos Aires: Editorial La Página S.A.

Kitchin, Rob, and Martin Dodge. 2007a. "Rethinking Maps." *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (3): 331–44.

———. 2007b. "Rethinking Maps." *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (3): 331–44.

Kwan, Mei-Po. 2011. "Affecting Geospatial Technologies: Towards a Feminist Politics of Emotion." In *The Map Reader: Theories of Mapping Practice and Cartographic Representation.*, edited by Martin Dodge, Rob Ktichin, and Chris Perkins, First. Chichester, West Sussex [England] ; Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Lagarde, Marcela. 2008. "Antropología, Feminismo y Política: Violencia Feminicida y Derechos Humanos de Las Mujeres." In *XI Congreso de Antropología: Retos Teóricos y Nuevas Prácticas*. Donostia: Ankulegi Antropologia Elkartea.

Laó-Montes, Agustín. 2016. "Afro-Latin American Feminisms at the Cutting Edge of Emerging Political-Epistemic Movements." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 14 (12): 1–24.

Lara, Gloria. 2010. "Una Corriente Etnopolítica En La Costa Chica, México." In *Política e Identidad. Afrodescendientes En México y América Central.*, edited by Odile Hoffmann, 307–34. Mexico, D.F: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales-CLACSO ; UNESCO, Unidad Regional de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas para América Latina y el Caribe.

LasCanta, LaDanta. 2017. "De La Teología al Antiextractivismo: Ecofeminismos En Abya Yala." *Ecología Política* 54: 37–43.

Leu, Lorraine. 2020. *Defiant Geographies: Race & Urban Space in 1920s Rio de Janeiro*. Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press.

https://go.openathens.net/redirector/umoncton.ca?url=https%3A%2F%2Febookcentral.proquest.com%2Flib%2Fumoncton-ebooks%2Fdetail.action%3FdocID%3D6126340.

Lewis, Laura A. 2003. *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*. Latin America Otherwise. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio. 2001. *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism*. Public Worlds, v. 9. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Loperena, Christopher Anthony. 2016. "Conservation by Racialized Dispossession: The Making of an Eco-Destination on Honduras's North Coast." *Geoforum* 69: 184–93.

López Chávez, América Nicte-Ha. 2018. "La Movilización Etnopolítica Afromexicana de La Costa Chica de Guerrero y Oaxaca: Logros, Limitaciones y Desafíos." *Perfiles Latinoamericanos* 26 (52): 1–33.

Lugones, Maria. 2010. "The Coloniality of Gender." In *Globalization and the Decoloniality Option.*, edited by Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar. London: Routledge.

Lund, Joshua. 2012. *The Mestizo State: Reading Race in Modern Mexico*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Maddrell, Avril. 2016. "Mapping Grief: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Spatial Dimensions of Bereavement, Mourning and Remembrance." *Social & Cultural Geography* 17 (2): 166–88.

Magaña, Maurice Rafael. 2020. *Cartographies of Youth Resistance: Hip-Hop, Punk, and Urban Autonomy in Mexico*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Masferrer León, Cristina V. 2013. *Muleke, Negritas y Mulatillos: Niñez, Familia y Redes Sociales de Los Esclavos de Origen Africano En La Ciudad de México, Siglo XVII*.

Primera edición. Colección Africanía 8. México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Masferrer León, Cristina V., and Leopoldo Trejo, eds. 2019. *Diversidades En Crisis. Transformaciones Socioambientales En Regiones Indígenas y Afromexicanas En Oaxaca.* Ciudad de México: INAH.

Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15 (1): 11–40.

McDonough, Kelly S. 2019. "Indigenous Technologies in the 1577 Relaciones Geográficas of New Spain; Collective Land Memory, Natural Resources and Herbal Medicine." *Ethnohistory* 66 (3): 465–87.

McKittrick, Katherine. 2006a. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2006b. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mitchell-Eaton, Emily. 2019. "Grief as Method: Topographies of Grief, Care, and Fieldwork from Northwest Arkansas to New York and the Marshall Islands." *Gender,Place and Culture* 26 (10): 1438–58.

Mohanty, Chandra. 2008. "Bajo Los Ojos de Occidente: Academia Feminista y Discursos Coloniales." In *Descolonizando El Feminismo. Teorías y Prácticas Desde Los Márgenes.* Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.

Mollett, Sharlene. 2006. "Race and Natural Resource Conflicts in Honduras." *Latin American Research Review* 41 (1): 76–101.

Mora, Mariana. 2017. "Ayotzinapa and the Criminalization of Racialized Poverty in La Montaña , Guerrero, Mexico." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 40 (1): 67–85.

Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. 2010. “Distributed Intensities: Whiteness, Mestizaje and the Logics of Mexican Racism.” *Ethniticies* 10 (3): 387–401.

Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G., and Emiko Saldívar Tanaka. 2016. “We Are Not Racists, We Are Mexicans’: Privilege, Nationalism and Post-Race Ideology in Mexico.” *Critical Sociology* 42 (4–5): 512–33.

Moreno Parra, María. 2019. “Racismo Ambiental: Muerte Lenta y Despojo de Territorio Ancestral Afroecuatoriano En Esmeraldas.” *Íconos-Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 64: 89–109.

Navarrete Linares, Federico. 2016. *México Racista: Una Denuncia*. Primera edición. México, D.F: Grijalbo.

Ng’weno, Bettina. 2007. “Can Ethnicity Replace Race? Afro-Colombians, Indigeneity and the Colombian Multicultural State.” *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 12 (2): 414–40.

Nixon, Rob. 2013. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. 1. Harvard Univ. Press paperback ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

Olivera, Mercedes, and Carlos Pérez. 2012. “From Integrationist ‘Indigenismo’ to Neoliberal De-Ethnification in Chiapas: Reminiscences.” *Latin American Perspectives* 39 (5): 100–110.

Parker, Brenda. 2006. “Constructing Community Through Maps? Power and Praxis in Community Mapping.” *The Professional Geographer* 58 (4): 470–84.

Perry, Keisha-Khan Y. 2013. *Black Women against the Land Grab: The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Quechua Reyna, Citlali. 2015. “La Movilización Etnopolítica Afrodescendiente En México y El Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial.” *Anales de Antropología* 49 (II): 149–73.

Quijano, Anibal. 2000. “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America.” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1.3: 533–78.

Radcliffe, Sarah A. 2017. “Decolonising Geographical Knowledges.” *Transactions of the Insitute of British Geographers* 42 (3): 329–33.

Safa, Helen. 2005. “Challenging Mestizaje: A Gender Perspective on Indigenous and Afro-Descendant Movements in Latin America.” *Critique of Anthropology* 25 (3): 307–30.

Santos, Milton. 1978. *Por Uma Geografia Nova. Da Crítica Da Geografia a Uma Geografia Crítica.* São Paulo: Hucitec/EdUSP.

Segato, Rita Laura. 2010. “Territory, Sovereignity, and Crimes of the Second State. The Writing on the Body of Murdered Women.” In *Terrorizing Women. Feminicide in the Americas.*, 70–92. United States of America: Duke University Press.

Sharpe, Christina Elizabeth. 2016. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sletto, Bjørn Ingmunn. 2009. “‘We Drew What We Imagined’. Participatory Mapping, Performance, and the Arts of Landscape Making.” *Current Anthropology* 50 (4): 443–76.

———. 2020. “Introduction.” In *Radical Cartographies: Participatory Mapmaking from Latin America*, First, 1–16. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Smith, Andrea. 2015. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Smith, Christen A. 2009. “Strategies of Confinement. Environmental Injustice and Police Violence in Brazil.” In *Environmental Justice in the New Millenium. Global Perspectives*

on Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights., edited by Filomina Chioma Steady, 93–114. United States of America: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2016a. *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil*. Urbana ; Chicago ; Springfield: University of Illinois Press.

———. 2016b. "Facing the Dragon: Black Mothering, Sequelae, and Gendered Necropolitics in the Americas." *Transforming Anthropology* 24 (1): 31–48.

Speed, Shannon. 2006. "At the Cross Roads of Human Rights and Anthropology: Towards a Critically Engaged Activist Research." *American Anthropologist* 108 (1): 66–77.

———. 2019. *Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State*. Critical Indigeneities. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Stavans, Ilan, José Vasconcelos, and José Vasconcelos. 2011. *José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.

Suárez Nava, Liliana and Hernández, Rosalva Aida, eds. 2008. *Descolonizando El Feminismo. Teorías y Prácticas Desde Los Márgenes.* Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra.

Sundberg, Juanita. 2014. "Decolonizing Posthumanist Geographies." *Cultural Geographies* 21 (1): 33–47.

Sweet L., Elizabeth, and Sara Ortiz Escalante. 2015a. "Bringing Bodies into Planning: Visceral Methods, Fear and Gender Violence." *Urban Studies* 52 (10): 1826–45.

———. 2015b. "Bringing Bodies into Planning: Visceral Methods, Fear and Gender Violence." *Urban Studies* 52 (10): 1826–45.

———. 2017. "Engaging Territorio Cuerpo-Tierra through Body and Community Mapping: A Methodology for Making Communities Safer." *Gender, Place & Culture. A Journal of Feminist Geography* 24 (4): 594–606.

Tallbear, Kim. 2017. “Beyond the Life/Not/Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking and New Materialisms.” In *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, 179–202. The MIT Press.

Taylor, Diana. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Todd, Zoe. 2018. “Refracting the State Through Human-Fish Relations: Fishing, Indigenous Legal Orders and Colonialism in North/Western Canada.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7 (1): 60–75.

Tzul, Tzul, Gladys. 2016. *Sistemas de Gobierno Comunal Indígena. Mujeres y Tramas de Parentesco En Chuimeq´ena´.* Guatemala: Sociedad Comunitaria de Estudios Estratégicos, Tzi´Kin Centro de Investigación y Pluralismo Jurídico, Maya´Wuj Editorial.

Varela-Huerta, Itza Amanda. 2014. “Proceso de Identificación de Los Pueblos Negros de La Costa Chica En México: Usos de La Cultura En La Constitución de Su Etnogénesis.” *Revista Insterticios de La Política y La Cultura* 5: 53–67.

———. 2019. “Nunca Más Un México Sin Nosotras. Feminismo y Mujeres Afromexicanas.” *Política y Cultura* 51 (June): 105–24.

Vasconcelos, José. 1977. *La Raza Cósmica.* Quinta. México: Espasa-Calpe Mexicana.

Vasconcelos, José, and Didier Tisdel Jaén. 1997. *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*. Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed. Race in the Americas. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Velázquez Gutiérrez, María Elisa, and Carolina González Undurraga. 2016. *Mujeres africanas y afrodescendientes: experiencias de esclavitud y libertad en América Latina y Africa. Siglos XVI al XIX*.

Velázquez, María Elisa. 2006. *Mujeres de Origen Africano En La Capital Novohispana, Siglos XVII y XVIII*. México: INAH, PUEG-UNAM.

Velázquez, María Elisa, ed. 2011. *Debates Históricos Contemporáneos: Africanos y Afrodescendientes En México y Centroamérica*. México, D. F: Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Institut de Recherche pour le Développment, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Velázquez, María Elisa, and Gabriela Iturralde. 2016a. "Afromexicanos: Reflexiones Sobre Las Dinámicas de Reconocimiento." *Anales de Antropología* 50: 232–46.

———. 2016b. "Afromexicanos: Reflexiones Sobre Las Dinámicas de Reconocimiento." *Anales de Antropología* 50: 232–46.

Vinson, Ben. 2018. *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*. Cambridge Latin American Studies 105. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wade, Peter. 2000. *Raza y etnicidad en Latinoamérica*. 1. ed. Quito: Abya-Yala.

———. 2005. "Rethinking Mestizaje: Ideology and Lived Experience." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37 (2): 239–57.

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4).

Wright, Melissa W. 2011. "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36 (3): 707–31.

Wynter, Sylvia. 1994. "'No Humans Involved'. An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Knowledge on Trial* 1 (1): 42–71.

———. 1995. "1492: A New World View." In *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Zaragocin Carvajal, Sofia. 2018. "Espacios Acuáticos Desde Una Descolonialidad Hemisférica Feminista." *Mulier Sapiens. Discurso, Poder, Género.* Año V (Diciembre 10): 7–19.

Zaragocin Carvajal, Sofia, Melissa Moreano Venegas, and Soledad Alvarez Velasco. 2018. "Hacia Una Reapropiación de La Geogragía Crítica En América Latina." *Íconos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales.* 61 (May): 11–32.

Zaragocin, Sofia. 2019a. "Gendered Geographies of Elimination: Decolonial Feminist Geographies in Latin American Settler Contexts." *Antipode* 51 (1): 373–92.

———. 2019b. "La Geopolítica Del Útero: Hacia Una Geopolítica Feminista Decolonial En Espacios de Muerte Lenta." In *Cuerpos, Territorios y Feminismos. Compilación Latinoamericana de Teorías, Metodologías y Prácticas Políticas.*, edited by Delma Tania Cruz, Manuel Bayón Jiménez, and Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo. Mexico: Abya Yala, Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, Bajo Tierra Ediciones y Libertad Bajo Palabra.

Endnotes

[1] This idea is developed in relationship to Giorgio Agamben's work, *Homo Sacer: Sovereing Power and Nude Life* (1998).

[2]. Many scholars have worked on the topic of more-than-human and other-than human as active sentient beings (Alaimo 2010; Burkhart 2016; Cunsolo and Landman 2017; Tallbear 2015).

[3] I build the term slow murder in dialogue with the concept of "slow death" developed by Laura Berlant. However, I differentiate it in the sense that slow murder implies an intentionality of killing and death.

[4] The recognition of Afrodescendant population in the Mexico City Constitution was a collective effort of organizations and scholars, some of which include: Afrodescendencias en México, Investigación e Incidencia A.C.; México Negro A.C.; Fundación Efecto Valores; Cintli Desarrollo y Equidad A.C., among others.

[5] According to Maurice Rafael Magaña (2020), caciquismo is a form of clientelism practiced in Latin America where a local boss dominates local politics through authoritarism. Additionally, the anti-racist activist and rapper known as "Filosoflow", told me on a personal interaction on social media that cacique is a taíno Caribbean original word, so it does not have a translation into Spanish.

[6]. Maroon communities refer to formerly enslaved Africans who fled and run away to geographically remote regions to gain their freedom.

[7] These are the Black and Indigenous gropus that have historically lived in the Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico,

[8]. Castillo Gómez, in her research on stereotypes in La Costa Chica, describes that Indigenous populations refer to black people as lazy and dirty. On the other side, Black populations refer to Indigenous people as submissive, and "talking another language" that they don't understand (2003, 281).

[9]. In February 2017, the Indigenous and Afrodescendant population published a written statement in which they affirm their will to protect the Río Verde, located in la Costa Chica. Since 2015, they have been organizing forums to discuss strategies against what they call "*proyectos de muerte*" (death projects). Read the statement at: http://pasodelareina.org/2017/02/21/pronunciamiento-por-los-territorios-de-los-pueblos-de-la-sierra-sur-y-costa-de-oaxaca/

[10] As cited also in (C. A. Smith 2016a)

[11] Fondo Semillas is a non-profit organization which, according to them, is "focused on improving women´s lives in Mexico". They fund different projects in the country. https://semillas.org.mx/en/#section-que-es-fondo-semillas

[12] See the annex for a detailed description on my first dialoque with the women I worked with.

13. Ejido "refers to a juridically defined system of land tenure as well as the community of peasants with rights over the land" (Jones 1996)

14. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, a lagoon is "an area of sea water separated from the ocean by a reef (a line of rocks and sand)."

15. According to Mexico's General Law of Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection, National Parks are "constituted by being areas with one or more ecosystems of scenic beauty, scientific, educational, recreational value, their historical value, due to the existence of flora and fauna, due to their aptitude for tourism development, or for other similar general reasons." Mexican Government Website: https://www.gob.mx/semarnat/articulos/parques-nacionales-de-mexico, accessed February 26, 2020.

16. All names used in this text are pseudonyms for personal security reasons.

17. Building from the work of Marisol de la Cadena (2010) I use the concept of other-than-human to describe "the plants,the, animals, the land, and in general, the earth-beings"who can have political agency (341) However, I would like to add that in certain moments the term more-than-human is particularly useful in my work because I also think of the dead as more-than-human entities.

18. There was another hydroelectric project, *Paso de la Reyna,* that was going to be built on the *Río Verde* and would have affected, among many other communities in the region, the lagoons. The Federal Electrical Commission announced the *Paso de la Reyna* hydroelectric project in 2006. According to a report by *EDUCA*, a Oaxacan NGO, "it had an investment of 60 million dollars, and would directly affect more than 40 communities" (2013). There has been a lot of resistance and struggles by local and national environmental defenders against the

project: there is even a very active collective of activists organized specifically against this hydroelectric project, called the*Consejo de Pueblos Unidos por la Defensa del Río Verde (COPUDEVER).* President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced in January of 2020 that *Paso de la Reyna* hydroelectric plant would not be built; however, weeks later, local activists said that they were informed that a new hydroelectric project for the regionexists." http://pasodelareina.org/2020/03/17/un-nuevo-proyecto-hidroelectrico-amenaza-al-rio-verde-en-oaxaca-copudever/. accessed 25 March, 2020. The report can be found online http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/mezinal/docs/5144.pdf, accessed 24 January, 2020.

19. Cerro Hermoso also has been deeply affected by ecocide: the bay that once existed there has disappeared, and now there is only open sea in the community, which is more dangerous for people. Before the disconnection of the canal from the Pacific Ocean to the lagoon, Cerro Hermoso was an important tourist center. Nowadays, it feels like a ghost town: it still has many hotels, cabins, and restaurants open, but few local and national tourists go there, and when they do it is mainly for food consumption.

20. In Zapotalito there is only one local public community clinic (*centro de salud)* with one nurse, and the doctor who is in turn for a year, since doctors are medicine students that are doing their community service, a requirement in order to graduate.

21. For example, in 1992, for the very first time, the Mexican constitution was changed to recognize Mexico as a multicultural nation. Later, in 2001, article 2 was reformed to recognize Indigenous groups in the country, thanks to the efforts by the Zapatista Army (EZLN) and negotiations with the government. However, in the end, the reform did not reflect the agreements of EZLN with the government and Indigenous rights were simplified to cultural rights, but not economic or political rights, also known as neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2005). Nevertheless, it was recently until 2019, that Black and Afrodescendant people were legally recognized in the national constitution of Mexico and in 2020 was the first time that Afrodescendants and Afromexicans, as an identity, were part of the national census. This recognition is only after more than 20 years of activism of Black, Afromexicans and Afrodescendants in the country (Lara, 2010b; Velázquez, and Iturralde 2016b; Quechua Reyna 2015b; Varela-Huerta 2019)

22. Translation to English from Spanish "feminismos territoriales".

23. The Chacahua-Pastoría Lagoons ecocide case was presented to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in October of 2018 by Afromexican woman Nadia Alvarado Salas as part of *Colectivo Copera -Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México* (Collective to Eliminate Racism in Mexico). https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/10/cidh-caso-laguna-chachahua-muerte-de-peces/ accessed September 17, 2019.

24. The increasing and almost unbearable violence is an everyday experience, but with it also comes deep grief: there is collective grief for the histories, the families, and the voices of those that are gone, massacred by violence.

25. I understand the complexities of associating Afrodescendant and Indigenous women with death and grief, in the sense that it could depict and reinscribe violence in their narratives; however, my intention here is to reflect upon and identify which communities have been historically grieving due to structural, racial, colonial and gendered violence, specifically in a country like Mexico, where mestizaje "erases" the racial problem and imposes uniform (whitened) identities. Also because even though there is an intimate connection between body-territory, I also want to describe not only the "positive" affective connections, but also the complexities of this interrelation. I believe that talking about grief in relationship to black and indigenous women is a catalyst that further impulses the ways in which everyday organizing and living practices, reproduces life and care.

26. Animal species that live in the lagoons are birds, fishes, shrimps, mussels, and crocodiles among others. To see more specific data about crocodiles in the *Parque Nacional Lagunas de Chacahua* see García-Grajales, Jesús, and Alejandra Buenrostro-Silva. 2017. "Estimación Poblacional Del Cocodrilo Americano (Crocodylus Acutus) en el Parque Nacional Lagunas de Chacahua, Oaxaca, México." *Revista Mexicana de Biodiversidad* 88: 936–43.

27. According to UNESCO the human body is 70-90% water: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Venice/pdf/special_events/bozza_scheda_DOW03_1.0.pdf

28. Another human rights report entitled "Derechos de las personas afrodescendientes" (Afrodescendant People's Rights) created by *Coordinación para la atención de los Derechos Humanos del Estado de Oaxaca* describes how local communities were opposed and demanded explanation of the waterbreaks project in Cerro Hermoso to ensure connection between the Chacahua Lagoon and the ocean. There was an agreement of meetings between the communities and the government officials in charge of the project, however, once the construction started, the observations made by the communities were ignored (2013, 60). https://www.hchr.org.mx/images/doc_pub/08_Afrodescendientes_oax.pdf accessed November 20th, 2020.

29. I use this gender binary, taking into account how gender is described in the quotidian in the community; however, I also want to acknowledge that there are also lgbtqi/trans people self-identified people in the community that question this binary, or that go beyond the cis construction of gender.

30. Approximately 10 women attended, and they were Black, Indigenous and Mestiza, had a wide range in age in between 18- 70 years old, and many of them came with their kids and babies, which were playing alongside them. It is important to mention that even if it was an open call to the workshop, many women could not assist for different reasons. For example, many of them have to work in their homes or go fishing, others have to take care of their babies, and others could not go because their husbands do not "allow them" to attend. Domestic violence is another form of violence that women confront in their everyday life in the community, and why it is important and meaningful for them to have women-centered spaces and acts of solidarity and care.

31. It is crucial to highlight that the relationship between these two women's organizations in the same community was, for the most part, one of cooperation and solidarity. In fact, both *Mujeres del Manglar* and *Colectiva de la Costa Ña´Tundaa´* had a close relationship. Both organizations were part of activities organized by the other groups, and co-organize community workshops for women around territory.

32. Lozano describe that death has been historically considered by Black and indigenous groups as a natural fact of life, and there are collective rituals to honor it, however, it is very different to face death caused by violence (Lozano Lerma 2019, 61).

33. The bejuco is a climbing woody vine, and the zapotillo is also known as chicozapote, which is a tree originally from Mexico, Central America and South America.

34. Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología (Ministery of Urban Development and Ecology)

35. this word is a literal translation from spanish *corporación.* Melchor is referring to some sort of police or army agency.

36. People in Zapotalito and around the Oaxacan coast call "Tutu" as the short form to refer to Tututepec, the town that is approximately 40 minutes away and where the regional government is located. All of local governmental requests have to be done there.

[37] A griddle made out of clay or sandstone.

38. According to the Real Academy of Spanish Language Dictionary, cal is an alkaline substance made up of calcium oxide, white, which hydrates or turns off in contact with water.

39. According to the Illustrated Encyclopedia delmaiz.com, nixtamalización is "as a process, nixtamalización is an alkaline heat treatment to soften the corn kernels. Said in simple terms, the nixtamalización process consists of boiling the corn in water with 1 to 3 percent of calcium hydroxide (cal)". (http://delmaiz.info/proceso-nixtamalizacion/)

40. The diminutive of panga, a modest-size boat use for fishing.

41. A rounded net used for fishing in the shallow water.

42. Trasmallo is a fishing tool, made by three large nets.

43. *Güeros* is a common word in Mexico to refer to blond or white people, in the context of Oaxaca, is generally referring to tourists or foreigners.

[44] According to the official document of the Convention of Wetlands,

45. The case was brought to the Interamerican Comission of Human Rights in 2018. However, until today there are no clear responses from the Mexican State.

46. Colectivo para Eliminar el Racismo en México (Collective to Eliminate Racism in Mexico).

47 Palmarito is one of the lagoons that is connected to the Chacahua-Lagoons through a set of canals.

[48]. Otra Voz. January 3, 2020 "Moira Millán y el concepto de Terricidio." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7bZlnjsDEw&feature=emb_title.

49. Throughout this chapter, I will use body-map and body-cartography interchangeably because the Latinamerican feminist methodology and theory literature uses both terms.

50. As Parker (2006) argues, "mapmaking that builds capacity for community mobilization, enhancing knowledge, and raising political consciousness" (478).

51. Mónica Moreno Figueroa explores how the mestizaje project is a whitening project, and while it denies racism, it is normalized and experienced daily by racialized people. Figueroa argues, "While mestizaje offers the possibility of flexible inclusion , it also allows an everyday experience of racism that continues to privilege processes of whitening alongside notions of whiteness and uses the national discourse, such as the Mexican identity, to cover up and render invisible processes of discrimination and social exclusion" (Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. 2010a, 398).

52. For Benedict Anderson (2016a), the Nation is an imagined community that creates individuals who will believe in it individually: a citizen. Mestizo geographies in this sense also create an imagined territory of the nation.

53. According to the description at the Benson Library, “On May 25, 1577, King Philip II of Spain ordered by royal decree the preparation of a general description of Spain's holdings in the Indies. Instructions and a questionnaire, issued in 1577 by the Office of the Cronista Mayor-Cosmógrafo, were distributed to local officials in the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru to direct the gathering of information. The questionnaire, comprised of fifty items, was designed to elicit basic information about the nature of the land and the life of its peoples. The replies, known as "relaciones geográficas," were written between 1579 and 1585 and were returned to the Cronista Mayor-Cosmógrafo in Spain by the Council of the Indies.”

54. Part of the description states, ¨Dicen que, en su gentilidad, les enviaban de Tututepec un gobernador que los rigiese y gobernase, como ahora lo hay, y este gobernador nombraba principales y ayudas, [a los] que les daba a cargo los indios de los barrios que había en el pueblo para que los capitanes señor cobrasen de ellos los tributos. Y ésta era su forma de gobernarse. Y [dicen] que solían traer guerra con los indios de Coatlan, a donde iban a la guerra con los de Tututepec. Y las armas con que peleaban eran arcos y flechas, y macanas y varas tostadas arrojadizas y rodelas, como se usaba en otros pueblos de toda esta, comarca. Y el vestido que solían traer era una tilma arrebujada en: el cuerpo y con sus bragueros, y todo lo demás descubierto. Y algunos traían cactles, [p. 15] que son a modo de alpargatas y, otros, descalzos; y, al presente, andan vestidos con camisas y jubones, y mantas. por capas, todo de lienzo de algodón, y unos zarahueles de lo mismo, angostos y largos, y sombreros y zapatos, algunos de ellos, y, otros, cactles como antiguamente. Y los mantenimientos que comían, dicen que era maíz, tostado y en tortillas, y tamales, que son como bollos hechos con la harina del maíz cocida y sobada, y frijoles (que son como habas) y calabazas y camotes (que son como nabos), y yerbas y frutas de muchas maneras, y carnes de venados y otros animales, sus vergüenzas. Y, al presente, andan vestidos con sus camisas de lienzo de algodón y zarahueles largos y angostos, y sus mantas de lo mismo, y sus sombreros y cactles, que son a manera de alpargates. Y los mantenimientos que comían en su infidelidad dicen ser tortillas hechas con maíz, y carnes de venados y liebres y aves de la tierra, y todo género de caza del monte, y calabazas y frijoles, y otros géneros de legumbres y yerbas; y, lo que ahora comen, es lo propio que en su gentilidad” (p. 16).

55. Salas, Cristóbal de, “Descripción de Cozautepec,” circa 1580, JGI XXV-06, Joaquín García Icazbalceta Collection of Relaciones Geográficas of Mexico and Guatemala, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

56. Raymond Craib makes an extensive exploration of different projects of national cartography by the Mexican State. For example, the creation of the Comisión Geográfico-Exploradora (CGE) in 1877. According to Craib, “The aim of the CGE -to systematically construct a master map of the Republic, at scale of I: I00.000- made it the most ambitious cartographic project in Mexico to date” (2004, 130).

57. For debates on the human-culture divide, see Bakari 2014, Boas 1928, Harris 1968, and Ortner 1972.

58. *Abya-Yala* is a Panamanian kuna indigenous word for what is conceived as the American continent. It means, “Land in its full maturity.”

59. I understand necropolitics through Achille Mbembe’s (2003) definition as the politics of deciding who lives and who dies.

60. Cerro Hermoso used to be one large community but after some internal conflict for land, the community divided into Cerro Hermoso and Campamento Cerro Hermoso. The division was only enacted by streets but each community has their own government and administration.

61. *Otra Voz.* January 3, 2020 *“Moira Millán y el concepto de Terricidio.”* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7bZlnjsDEw&feature=emb_title.

[62] To learn more about Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio and their work, visit https://territorioyfeminismos.org/

[63] To learn more about the work of Iconoclasistas, visit https://iconoclasistas.net/

[64] To learn more about the work of Geobrujas, follow their social media https://www.facebook.com/geobrujas/ and @geobrujas on Twitter.

65. Femicides are defined as the killing of women based on the mere fact that they are women (Russell as cited in Monárrez 2006).

66. In 1992, for the very first time, the Mexican constitution was changed to recognize Mexico as a multicultural nation. Later, in 2001, Article 2 was reformed to recognize Indigenous groups in the country, thanks to the efforts by the Zapatista Army (EZLN) and negotiations with the government. However, in the end, the reform did not reflect the agreements of EZLN with the government and Indigenous rights were simplified to cultural rights, but not economic or political rights. Article 1 was also reformed, and they added a section on prohibition of any form of discrimination. It was not until 2019 that the Black population was federally recognized in the National Constitution. It is important to highlight that the recognition has to do with the political mobilization and pressure that Black organizations have organized during the past 20 years. In 2021, for the first time as well, the Black population was

included in the National Census. According to the National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI), 2,576,213 million, or 2%, of the total population self-recognized as Afrodescendant. Black activists told me that they believe there would be more people self-recognized if there were more campaigns about blackness in Mexico. According to Yolanda and Rosa, the erasure of blackness in history from the Mexican State and the anti-Black racism naturalized in the country makes people not want to recognize as Black; national campaigns with information about blackness would help to push back against this narrative.

67. Yásnaya Aguilar is paraphrasing the Zapatista phrase "Nunca más un México sin Nosotros" (Never again a Mexico without us), to refer to how EZLN was challenging the Mexican State's imposed invisibility and violence exerted towards Indigenous people in Mexico. In this new phrase by Yásnaya, Un México sin nosotros (A Mexico without us) she changed the wording to consider the existence of populations outside of the Mexican Nation-State.

68. According to Lewis (2003), in regard to mestizo caste, "it is the caste that, beginning in 1580, free black and mulattoes were ordered to pay tribute alongside Indians while mestizos, like Indian nobles, were exempted. In the 1580s, mestizos were allowed to enter the priesthood while mulattoes and blacks continued to be barred. In addition, whether they were free or enslaved, blacks and mulattoes were usually more harshly punished for routine infractions of the law than were mestizos" (2003, 84).

69. According to Stavans (2011), "the word mestizo in the sixteenth-century Spanish sometimes referred to children born out of wedlock, thus uniting it with the term bastard" (8). Mestizo then literally became a product of a non-legitimate relationship, and in many cases, it represents the result of rape—a colonial wound still present in Mexican bodies, bodies like mine that are categorized in contemporary times as mestizos. Douglas Cope (1994) identifies the origin of the term mestizo in the late 1530s: "it referred to marginal individuals persons of Spanish–Indian descent who were not full members of either group." Juan Zumárraga, the first archbishop of Mexico, described them as "orphaned boys, sons of Spanish men and Indian women" who wandered through the countryside, ignorant of the law and Christianity and reduced to eating raw meat" (1994, 15). Mestizo was also one of the categories within the caste system during the 1500s, represented in paintings. Stavans argues, "The Hispanic world caste system—with its elaborate taxonomy that included *españoles, criollos, mestizos, indios, mulatos, zambos, and negros*—emphasized purity of blood as proof of casticismo, authentic Iberian lineage" (2011, 8). The caste system was particular in the context of Latin America, and "it did not refer to the endogamous and ascribed socioreligious group the Portuguese understood as characterizing Hindu India. Instead, it was more akin to modern notions of race, insofar as it referred to descent and to putative distinctions carried in blood, ancestry, and color" (Lewis 2003, 22). The caste system in the New Spain territory was hierarchizing lineage, where white and Spaniards were on top and Black population on the last scale. In the case of Indios, "Spaniards designated as indios groups who, before the conquest, had disparate cultural and linguistic traditions and name for themselves" (Lewis 2003, 26). It seems that all the caste systems indeed homogenized differences within Indigenous and Black populations. This caste system specifically defined mestizos as the result of Spanish and Indian descent, a definition that continues today: "the word mestizo derived from the Spanish word *mezcla* (mixture), implied that although they were clearly separate, Indians and Spaniards were nevertheless blendable and might successfully mate to create a new person." (Lewis 2003, 30). However, "it took a long time for the idea of bastardy to metamorphose from a derogatory concept to one denoting alternative forms of pride, dignity and self-respect" (Stavans 2011, 8).

70. Anthropologist Manuel Gamio states in his book, *Forjando Patria* (1916), that the aim of the indigenismo project is "to create 'a powerful patria and a coherent, defined nationality,' based on 'racial approximation, cultural fusion, linguistic unification, and economic equilibrium'" (1916, 177). The mestizaje project involved the acculturation of Indigenous people to mestizo culture through integrationist policies; however, blackness vanishes from the narrative because the Black population, "contrary to indigenous people, were not recognized as having the right to preserve—or recreate—their own internal hierarchies, and the possibility of a slave community, society or nation was aborted" (Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar Tanaka 2016, 521). Even Aguirre Beltrán, the first anthropologist to make a study about Black people in Mexico in 1946, called Afrodescendants *Afromestizos,* because, according to the mestizaje ideology, they had to be integrated into the national identity and their naming had to emphasize that the Black population in Mexico has had a long history of mestizaje, or *mixture* with Indian and mestizo populations (Hoffman 2014). This mixture helps explain why the Black population in Mexico, contrary to other Latin American countries, experienced a rapid decline in slavery and "were already largely of mixed race, comprising peasants, laborers and 'free' artisans" (Hoffman 2014, 89). Interestingly, though, the indigenismo project blocked any study of contemporary Black populations, which were considered "not authentic" and soon-to-be-disappeared. Mexican anthropology was centered in the study of Indigenous groups soon to be "integrated" into the national dominant society (Hoffman 2014, 92).

71. Claudio Lomnitz (2001) interprets the mestizo identity as a challenge to the United States: "Mestizos were thus a fortified version of the indigenous race, and the modifications brought about by this mixture of Spanish

and Indian races would, eventually, create a population that would be finally capable of holding against the United States" (53).

72. In these lines, Vasconcelos describes the racial relations in the U.S., where racial mixing is seen as a risk for the "white civilization." Vasconcelos argues how mixture and mestizaje, as an opposite approach to racial purity is more inclusive and from an anti-colonial anti-imperialist alternative. Vasconcelos wrote about the difference with North America in regard to mixture: "The case of North America, as we all know, was very different because of the racial segregation. This was not an invasion, at least not a sudden overwhelming invasion, but a long penetration of the territory without conservation of the native stock, and consequently without social contact or any other relation with the Indian. This difference is the origin of the policy and of the practice of what we may call the one-race standard as against the mixed-race standard. By that I mean this undeniable fact that the civilization of North America is a one-race civilization, a white-race civilization as you insist on calling yourselves, sometimes even to the exclusion of other whites, such, as, for instance, the Spaniards. A white civilization that may contain, and does contain, millions of other racial stocks such as the Negro, but does not consider such dissimilar stock as part of itself and does not rule intermarry with it. The Negro here, as well as the Indian, is in a world apart socially and is a body that is connected only politically with the white population" (Vasconcelos, as cited in Stavan 2011, 95).

73. Delgadillo argues that Anzaldúa's use of mestizaje also creates a distance from the patriarchal-driven agenda of the Chicano Movement itself, as the new mestiza is a complex identity in the U.S. context. Delgadillo explains, "In *Borderlands,* spiritual mestizaje exists in contrast to racial mestizaje, or interracial mixing, material mestizaje or the syncretic fusion of varied cultural elements. . . . In the paragraph leading up to the assertion of spiritual mestizaje, Anzaldúa defines herself as a mestiza, reasserting the pejorative, derogatory meaning of mestizo/a as marginal, half-breed, uncultured body over the celebratory enshrinement of the mestizo/a identity in a move that cracks the sexist, nationalist, and racist encodings of the term" (2011, 13).

74. Cahuas, Madelain. Interrogating Absences in Latinx Theory and Placing Blackness in Latinx Geographical Thought: A Critical Reflection. Society and Space Magazine. Digital text. https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/interrogating-absences-in-latinx-theory-and-placing-blackness-in-latinx-geographical-thought-a-critical-reflection Accessed, May 15th, 2021.

75. Vasconcelos argues, "In this way, in a very few generations, monstrosities will disappear; what today is normal will come to seem abominable. The lower types of the species will be absorbed by the superior type. In this manner, for example, the Black could be redeemed, and step by step, by voluntary extinction, the uglier stocks will give away to the more handsome. Inferior races, upon being educated, would become less prolific, and the better specimens would go on ascending a scale of ethnic improvement, whose maximum type is not precisely the White, but that new race to which the White himself will have to aspire with the object of conquering the synthesis" (32).

76. Vasconcelos refers to this fifth race in relationship to land and Nature "all the essential elements are, without a doubt, abundant in quantities that surpass those of any other region on earth: Natural resources, arable land, water, and favorable climate. In regard to the latter factor, some will raise, of course, an objection: The climate, it will be said, is adverse to the new race, because the greatest part of the available land. Is located in the hottest region of the earth. However, this is precisely the advantage and the secret of the future. The great civilization began in the Tropics and the final civilization will return to the Tropics" (23).

77. *Mexico murder rate hits record high in 2019.* Aljazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/1/21/mexico-murder-rate-hits-record-high-in-2019 Accessed May 15th, 2021.

78. *Mexico. Events of 2020*. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/mexico# Accessed May 15th, 2021.

79. For more information on violence against women in Oaxaca, visit the webpage of the organization Consorcio: http://consorciooaxaca.org.mx/continua-la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-en-oaxaca/

80. For more information on violence against women in Guerrero, visit: http://www.tlachinollan.org/comunicado-padecen-mujeres-y-ninas-de-la-montana-de-guerrero-violencia-y-discriminacion-institucionalizada/

81. To read more about drug trafficking violence in Guerrero, visit: http://www.colloqui.org/colloqui/2016/7/18/la-narcoviolencia-en-guerrero

82. In November 2015, Afrodescendant and Indigenous communities had a meeting to resist against mining corporations in La Costa Chica region. To read their political statement, visit: http://www.tlachinollan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Manifiesto-La-Monta%C3%B1a-y-Costa-Chica-de-Guerrero-Territorio-Libre-de-Miner%C3%ADa.pdf